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KING SHURA

BOOK 01

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King Shura

(수라왕)

by

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Synopsis

Cho Ryu Hyang was good at math from a young age.

When he enrolled into the The Theoretical Maths and Martial Arts School, the teacher, Jo Gi Chun, recognized Cho Ryu Hyang's talent immediately and took him in.

One day, Cho Ry Hyang found a book in the library known as the "Moon Edge Flower Algorithm Magic".

Through the book, he met a legendary individual known as Zhuge Liang...

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Prologue

I asked him.

“Who’d win if you fought with the Fighting King (拳王)?”

When I asked this question, his arrogant face showed some interest.

“You came all the way here to ask just that?”

“It’s an important matter to me.”

“Interesting.”

He looked like he wanted to pass on my question, but he soon began to muse upon my question.

And after a long time passed, he slowly opened his mouth.

“If I’m willing to sacrifice myself a bit, I would win.”

“By sacrifice you mean...?”

“I should be willing to give up a leg or an arm at least.”

He nodded after giving it some more thought.

“I guarantee it.”

I took out my writing tools, and drew one stroke on my paper.

And then I asked another question.

“What would happen if you fought against the Sabre King (刀王)?”

“Sabre King...”

He smirked and without even giving it a thought, spoke:

“Again, I’d win.”

“Without any loss?”

He nodded.

“He didn’t even reach the wall yet. If I were to fight him right now, I’d win without any loss.”

“What if he did reach the wall?”

“Then like before, I’d have to sacrifice a limb to win.”

“So you’re confident you’d win no matter what.”

“Indeed.”

I drew another stroke on the paper.

And I asked a new question.

“Do you think you’d win if you went up against the Sword King (劍王)?”

He started to ponder upon the question again.

But unlike before, this time he contemplated the question even longer than before.

And after a while, he carefully laid out his words.

“Probably a tie resulting in heavy injuries on both sides.”

I stopped my hand reaching for the brush, and asked:

“The Beast King (野獸王), who is said to fear none under the heavens, doesn’t know if he would win or not in this battle?”

His face wrinkled in displeasure when I provoked him.

“The Sword King reached the limits of his power. He’s like me. In that case, not even god would be able to predict the results of our battle. The results of the battle will be decided on who has more willpower, or who is at the peak condition.”

“If the Sword King was at the peak condition?”

The Beast King.

Gu Hui answered my question with a bitter expression.

“In that case, the probability of my death would be quite high.”

“I understand.”

Unlike last time, I took the brush and made a vertical stroke on the paper.

The Beast King, who was staring at my paper with a curious expression, asked me a question.

“Is that the material you’ll be using for your work?”

“Yes. I’ll be ranking the Kings based on this.”

“It is an interesting concept. I am genuinely interested by it. Will you show me when you are finished?”

“Of course. Your status allows you to be able to acquire something like this.”

Beast King Gu Hui.

His arrogant face showed a satisfied expression for the first time.

I jabbed a question at him as I looked at his face.

“What would the results be if you fought King Shura (修羅王)?”

“King Shura....”

His face became those of bewilderment.

The fact that the man who was said to be able to take on anything in the world showed this face surprised me, and so I was staring at this face with great enthusiasm.

And after a few moments, he answered me with a reluctant face.

“I don’t know about the other guys, but I really don’t want to fight him.”

He answered me with an unclear statement, unlike with all the other questions.

So I asked him a different question to clarify.

“Then... are you saying that you’d lose to him?”

“I don’t know. I think it’s a little different than that...”

He started thinking a bit while stroking his beard, and nodded.

“Yes, it would be alright to put it like that, I suppose.”

This time, I was the one to show a bewildered face.

The Beast King, after seeing my face, showed a strange expression, and asked me a question.

“I’m wondering. You went to the other guys before coming to me, yes? What did they say about Shura?”

I closed my mouth.

It wasn’t time to disclose this information to the public yet.

“.....You’ll see when I finish my work in the future.”

“Really? What a pity.”

He backed down unexpectedly easily.

I thought he’d be more assertive about it...

I stood up and left, leaving behind the Beast King, who had a strange grin etched onto his face.

I did accomplish the goal that I came to Nanman (南蠻) for.

But there still was a very annoying problem left at hand.

‘To think that everyone in the Four Kings(四大天王) would all say the same thing...’

I looked at the name “King Shura” written on the paper, and my face contorted into that of annoyance.

The Four Kings.

The ones who strive to become the strongest all said the exact same thing.

An enemy they did not wish to fight.

An enemy they would all most likely lose to if they fought head-on.

And after their answer, each of the Four Kings would ask the same question the Beast King asked, with the same grin on their faces.

How did the other Kings answer this question?

What did this mean?

What's the meaning hidden behind those smiles?

'Is there something else about him that I should know about?'

I drew a vertical stroke on the paper with an irritated face.

King Shura, Cho Ryu Hyang.

Because of this one man, the completion of my work was delayed greatly.

The man that made me the most frustrated.

The man that appeared in the world rankings at the youngest age, and shook the heavens greatly.

“King Shura...”

I adjusted his rankings a little, and closed the paper.

The work I started as a joke at first, was now completed.

– The Martial World Sequence Records (江湖序列錄)’s author, Neng Ha Young (冷夏榮).

This story was found in her memoirs.

I like the phrase “Equivalent exchange”.

It means that if one gives something to another, he/she would receive something of equal value.

It really is obvious, but there is no such thing as “free” in the world.

If there’s something gained, there’s something that is also lost.

If I think about it, I gained this insight at a very young age.

Chapter 1. The Math Genius

“Cho Ryu Hyang, what’s the answer to this problem?”

“8532.”

“.....Correct. How about this?”

“6320.”

“.....How do you solve this thing just by glancing at it? You started learning math after me and you’re already better.”

The boy who answered the questions lazily while browsing through the books. Cho Ryu Hyang. This boy adjusted his glasses, a rare tool in this day and age, and answered.

“You didn’t concentrate. That’s why.”

“Says the guy who’s answering the question while reading books.”

Cho Ryu Hyang shrugged at the boy who seemed at least twice his size.



“You’re in a family of martial artists anyways, so doing well in math shouldn’t matter, right? You just have to be good at martial arts.”

“This is a matter of pride, damn it.”

The boy with the big physique.

Peng Ga Ho, as the second son of the biggest martial clan in the south, known as the North River Clan (河北彭家), answered whilst frowning in annoyance.

“I never thought I was really dumb, but whenever I look at you, I feel like an idiot.”

“At least you’re better at martial arts than me.”

“That’s obvious, you idiot. I trained in the main family for years, you think it would make sense if you were better at martial arts than me? Plus, I’m even two years older than you..... If I didn’t even have a better physique than you, I should just go kill myself.”

Peng Ga Ho, since childhood, was trained in various martial arts, and was fed multitudes of precious medicines. Compared to that, while Cho Ryu Hyang had many other achievements, he was someone who could barely understand only the basics of martial arts. Obviously it was impossible to compare these two. Cho Ryu Hyang, as if he realized this fact, nodded and calmly said:

“Well, the investments that were made on us were too different, anyways.”

“.....You’re way too calculative.”

“Thanks for the compliment.”

“How’s that a compliment? It’s an insult!”

Cho Ryu Hyang smirked at his friend, who was pestering him since a while back, and told him:

“Just like how your house stakes their life on swords, our house stakes our life on numbers. You being better than me at martial arts is as obvious as me being better than you at math. So don’t start getting fired up at such useless things. It’s a waste of time.”

“W-who said I was getting fired up?”

Peng Ga Ho’s face turned red in anger. Cho Ryu Hyang, whilst seeing his face, took his glasses off and rubbed his eyes.

“Me taking first place at the Mathematical Theories Competition was obvious. You taking third place was what was really surprising. You should be content with this, friend.”

“Yeah, you should be satisfied with that results, Peng Ga Ho. That’s the limit of your brain, after all.”

A boy suddenly barged himself into the conversation.

This boy, who possessed a thin body, without a speck on his body, was Un Geuk Lin, the youngest child in the martial family said to be able to rival the North River Clan, the Pearl Sage Clan.

“Un Geuk Lin, why are you barging into our conversation? Us big brothers are having a serious conversation here.”

When Peng Ga Ho asked him with a pout, Un Geuk Lin responded with a big grin on his face.

“Big brother my ass. Also, this conversation didn’t seem important at all.”

“Are you here to pick a fight again?”

“I’m here to ask a favor from Cho Ryu Hyang. I don’t have any business with you, so you can go f*ck yourself.”

“You trying to pick a fight with big brother?”

“Big brother this, big brother that.... if we’re fighting with our fists, I’ll gladly accept.”

Peng Ga Ho slowly stood up after hearing Un Geuk Lin’s challenge.

“The main house talks with our swords only. The petty fist fights the peasants have with each other doesn’t even count as a fight. This big brother will go easy on you with a wooden sword, so come to the arena with me.”

“You asshole... How are you even able to say your going to use weapons with a straight face like that? Right, Cho Ryu Hyang?”

When Un Geuk Lin asked for assistance, Cho Ryu Hyang, who put his glasses back on a while back, answered with a bored tone.

“The Pearl Sage Clan is famous for their skill with their fists and poles, while the North River Clan is famous for their sword techniques. It’s a useless to try to see who’s stronger. Also, you guys are being way too loud here. If you’re going to fight, can you do it outside? I still have some books to read.....”

“Stop holing yourself in the corner and go exercise outside. At this rate, you’re going to have fungus all over yourself.”

When Peng Ga Ho scolded him, Cho Ryu Hyang again answered with a bored tone.

“I clean myself daily, so I have no worries like that. I actually like washing myself, you know.”

When Cho Ryu Hyang turned his attention back to his book, Peng Ga Ho said something to Un Geuk Lin.

“Un Geuk Lin, you said you had something to do with him, right?”

“Yeah. That’s why I came. You think I’m crazy enough to come to this place for any other reason?”

“I thought so. In that case, help me do this.”

“Do what?”

Peng Ga Ho, with an evil smile on his face, grabbed one of Cho Ryu Hyang’s arms.

“You hold the other side.”

Cho Ryu Hyang tried to resist, but naturally he didn't have the strength to even impede Peng Ga Ho. Un Geuk Lin wasn't someone to decline this sort of thing, so he quickly grabbed Cho Ryu Hyang's other arm, and put it over his shoulder.

“The training field, right?”

“Of course, comrade.”

Cho Ryu Hyang, knowing that when these two rivals were unmatched in strength when they combined their powers, gave up on escaping. He wrinkled his nose a little, and said,

“Don't do this, I don't like exercising.”

“Don't you know that you need a healthy body for a healthy mind, friend? There's going to be a Martial Arts Competition soon anyways, so let's go train our bodies for that. ”

“I'm not interested in a competition like that.”

“I'm interested, friend. That's why we should go together, Uhahaha!”

Looking at Peng Ga Ho, who was dragging him by the arms while laughing, Cho Ryu Hyang let out a small sigh.

Even though he looks big and dumb on the outside, Peng Ga Ho

was unexpectedly smart. Contrary to that, Un Geuk Lin looked small and weak on the outside, but was actually extremely sly and hard working. Taking these two on as friends was indeed a very good thing, but there were parts of Cho Ryu Hyang's life that he had to throw away as sacrifice.

There was a book that lay face up, far away from where Cho Ryu Hyang currently was. Looking at the Book on Math Theory that he found with great difficulty, Cho Ryu Hyang's face turned into that of sadness. He was so close to finishing the book, and then a useless event happened again. Cho Ryu Hyang felt pity for himself for being in a situation like this.

“Chi (技) isn't something that you master the first time you practice it. In fact, you can say that everything started the moment you access Chi. You must cycle Chi through body thousands of times before mastering it. Only when you master Chi, can you break your shell and reach the wall.”

Peng Ga Ho nodded with empathy as he listened to the old scholar in the auditorium. And he whispered to Cho Ryu Hyang the moment after.

“This is just like the elders at the main house teaching us about Chi Breakthroughs.”

“Really?”

“The fact that martial power and math is related to each other in a way is quite interesting. I knew my father had a good reason for seething me here.”

The old scholar at the front was a famous mathematician known as Jo Gi Chun (朝紀天). Right now he was staying here in the mountains because of his old age, but when he was young, his calculation skills were said to be unfathomable. The fact that he was able to finish documents that normally needed at least 10 people alone showed how much brainpower he had.

“The one talking over there, it’s you, isn’t it, Peng Ga Ho?”

“No it’s not.”

When Peng Ga Ho got caught, he took out his usual poker face and denied it. But Jo Gi Chun wasn’t that easy to trick.

“You think you can hide that, especially with that big body of yours? Be a man and admit that you did it.”

Peng Ga Ho, who put his pride on his manliness and honor, made a concerned face. Soon after, he admitted his crime.

“Yes, I talked.”

“And the boy who’ll be sacrificed with you would of course be Cho Ryu Hyang.”

Cho Ryu Hyang wrinkled his face while fixing his glasses.

The teacher created a situation where Cho Ryu Hyang couldn't even try to deny that he talked. Cho Ryu Hyang was clearly impressed at how the teacher set up the trap, and made a mental note to try to learn this trick.

“Go stand at the back of the class, in the [horse stance](#) for 15 minutes.”

“Alright.”

Peng Ga Ho, who was thinking ‘This is a piece of cake’, when he stood up, had his face contorted into that of annoyance thanks to the words Chao Ji Tian uttered soon after.

“Ah, I almost forgot. Peng Ga Ho, you stand for 30 minutes. Don't use your chi either.”

The kids were staring at him.

Peng Ga Ho couldn't try to back out, especially when he admitted his crimes like a man in front of everyone. Because of that, Peng Ga Ho stood at the back of the auditorium with a very painful expression on his face. It would be devilishly hard, but as long as he tried, Peng Ga Ho could definitely complete it.

While Peng Ga Ho tried to force himself to endure, Cho Ryu Hyang, who was standing next to him, sighed. He felt that this punishment was a little unfair, but he knew that it would be useless to confront the teacher about it. After all, he'd been in this situation more than just several times.

He expertly took on the horse stance, and started breathing comfortably. Then he concentrated on the lecture.

The Theoretical Maths and Martial Arts School (有技算法武藝學堂).

This school, which possessed an incredibly long name, was the nation's biggest school of mathematics. Disregarding the size of the school, it wouldn't be a stretch to say that this was the only school in the continent that could actually teach math properly.

Especially the lecture that Cho Ryu Hyang was listening to with absolute concentration.

Because this was Jo Gi Chun's lecture on math, he wanted to capture every single detail about it, no matter how tiring it was.

“The skill of teaching chi to others is easy to teach, as you do not have to break through in order to perform it. Learning it is equally easy. But in order to obtain the true power with it requires an astronomical amount of work. Teaching to others the insights you obtained would be even harder. I hope at least one of you I teach would be able to obtain the truth and reach the limit of your powers.”

“Have you reached the limit yet, master?”

Jo Gi Chun paused for a moment when one of the students asked him this question. The old man, who was unable to lie to others, answered the student with a bitter face.

“I, who is standing before you all, can’t be said to have reached the limit. I only feel that I am closer to it. ”

“If you, who studied math for all your life, was unable to reach it, isn’t it plausible to say that this ‘limit’ doesn’t even exist at all?”

It was a bold question.

Cho Ryu Hyang stared at the boy who asked the two questions just now.

The boy was from one of the 5 Great Martial Clans, specifically the Nangong Great House (南宮世家).

He was the third child in the house, known as Nangong Yubin (南宮玉彬).

Nangong Yubin was famous amongst the students for being the smartest out of everyone in the entire school body. From martial arts to math, even calligraphy. He was unparalleled in all areas.

Many envied the young man, who was a genius who was even in a great clan, but Cho Ryu Hyang thought a bit differently.

‘Just how much did he work to get this far?’

The many talents that Nangong Yubin possesses.

He didn’t know about the other talents, but academic studies and martial arts was one of those arts that clearly displayed how much one worked to attain the current level they were in. It wasn’t something you could slack off in just because you were a genius.

Cho Ryu Hyang believed that he only won against Nangong Yubin in the math competition because he more time and effort into it than Nangong Yubin. It definitely wasn’t because he was a genius. That was what Cho Ryu Hyang was thinking.

Anyways, the teacher, Jo Gi Chun, was staring at Nangong Yubin quietly after taking the offensive question. After a while, he shook his head, saying:

“The limit is definitely there. I’ve seen someone who reached such a level.”

“.....!”

“So don’t get suspicious and keep moving forward. If you do that, you will be able to reach such a point. I don’t know about anything else, but when it comes to mathematics, I’ve dedicated a lot of my

time to come up with a plan to instruct you. So for those of you who get confused or feel that the lecture is getting too hard, don't be afraid to seek help."

"I understand."

Everyone said this in unison, and took out a book that had the phrase "Math Overview" written on it. After opening it, everyone in the class started to use their abacus. There were countless math problems in the book, and using that, the children were polishing their skills.

"It's a little strange."

Peng Ga Ho suddenly whispered.

He looked at Cho Ryu Hyang, and started to explain.

"When the teacher talked about mastering the Chi, in terms of martial arts, I thought he was talking about the state of the body when the energies in the body become harmonious, therefore making the martial artist would reach his/her peak condition, right?"

"So?"

Peng Ga Ho had a habit of relating everything with the world with martial arts, one way or the other. Cho Ryu Hyang knew this very well. And so he listened to Peng Ga Ho with great care, as he

was able to gain some insights from Peng Jia Hu sometimes.

“There aren’t many people who actually managed to harmonize the energies in their body right now. I guess there would be the 3 sovereigns, the 5 emperors, and the 7 kings (三皇五帝七君) who reached such a state.”

“Yeah.”

Cho Ryu Hyang wasn’t too interested in martial arts, but he knew about those individuals because he heard so much about them. Out of all the martial artists in the world, they were the individuals who were known to be the strongest. These 15 people governed the martial community with an iron grip.

The 15 guests of the land.

The words they uttered in the martial world was the law, and the truth.

“But in history, although there were people who reached the bottleneck of the martial harmony, there were none who actually broke through and entered the realm of the gods. Well, these monks say that the founder of the Evil sect, the Tian Mo (天魔), reached the godly realm, but that’s just their usual religious bullshit, and others say that the leader of the Shaolin temple reached the godly realm too, but that was never confirmed.”

“mm....”

“I think Jo Gi Chun thinks that the Martial Harmony and the Godly Realm is the same thing. But he said that he said that he saw someone who reached the peak of the Martial Harmony, right? I think that’s just a joke. The godly realm’s something that can only be attained in legends.”

Cho Ryu Hyang thought a bit.

Peng Ga Ho’s statements truly made sense. But this statement was fundamentally wrong from the start.

With sweat pouring down his forehead, Cho Ryu Hyang said something to Peng Ga Ho as he fixed his glasses.

“The teacher I know does not joke.”

“Hey, but you can’t deny what he’s saying is the truth, right?”

“Peng Ga Ho, I’m not talking about that.”

“Then what are you talking about?”

Cho Ryu Hyang turned his head sideways slightly. When he did so, he could feel the sweat dripping down his chin.

“I’m trying to say that the teacher was listening to our conversation since a while back.”

Peng Ga Ho then turned his head with a stone-face.

He could see Jo Gi Chun with his typical emotionless face.

When their eyes met, Jo Gi Chun slowly spoke up.

“Like your friend said, I don’t really like jokes. Those meatless stories never do help me progress anyways.”

Peng Ga Ho tried to put on a face smile, but the teacher’s face did not change a bit. It seemed that Jo Gi Chun was listening to the conversation since a while back.

‘Damn it, how can he eavesdrop on his students like that?’

When Peng Ga Ho was insulting the teacher in his mind, Jo Gi Chun opened his mouth again.

“I wasn’t trying to listen at first. You were just way too loud.”

When Peng Ga Ho realized that the teacher knew what he was thinking, he had a priceless expression on his face.

‘Clever old man!’

Was he using some kind of magic?

How did he figure out what Peng Ga Ho was thinking so accurately?

While Peng Ga Ho was trying to figure out how the teacher figured out his thoughts, Cho Ryu Hyang waited for the teacher's final judgement.

After a minute of thinking, Jo Gi Chun decided what to do with the students.

“Cho Ryu Hyang can come back in, and Peng Ga Ho can stand in that position for 30 more minutes.”

“T-teacher, are you telling me to stand here for even longer?”

When Peng Ga Ho half-shouted, half-screamed at the teacher, the teacher nodded with an emotionless look.

“I do not joke. Please, do continue to stand.”

Chapter 2. My Name Is Zhuge Liang!

After Jo Gi Chun's math lecture, Cho Ryu Hyang left Peng Ga Ho, who was complaining about how much his legs hurt, and went straight for the library. After a quick ID check at the entrance, Cho Ryu Hyang entered the library, and was instantly greeted with the familiar smell of paper and ink. Indeed, it was peaceful and quiet here. Other than Cho Ryu Hyang, there was no one inside the spacious room he was in. Cho Ryu Hyang enjoyed this kind of peacefulness.

Here at the library, there were still countless mathematical books to be read, and reading them was Cho Ryu Hyang's only hobby, as well as a daily commitment.

From a young age, Cho Ryu Hyang loved to solve mathematical problems. And as his clan happened to be closely related to the government works, he naturally came across mathematics, which he happened to be suitable for him.

As long as you use the right algorithm, you always get the right answer. How appealing was that? If it was anyone like Peng Ga Ho or Un Geuk Lin, their faces would pale at the sight of it, but to Cho Ryu Hyang, mathematics was a fascinating subject that ceaselessly provided him endless joy.

Cho Ryu Hyang's eyes seemed to sparkle as he stared at the countless books packed into the bookshelves of the library. His eyes moved to the bottom corner of the bookshelf, where all the old math theory books were gathered, and tilted his head in curiosity. There was a old, worn out book that had one of its

corners stuck out. He walked to it, and looked at the title of the book.

Moon Edge Flower Algorithm Magic (月刃森羅算法術解) ([上](#))

(TL: 上 means book one.)

It was a book with a overly flashy name. It was a title he never heard of before.

‘Is this the original?’

Normally, a book this old would be copied by someone else by hand, and it would be put into the archives.

Most of the books in this building were like this. The originals were usually written such a long time ago, there was barely any of them here. It was rare to see an old book in the library.

That’s why his curiosity was aroused. He found something quite rare, after all.

He sat down on the floor right where he was standing. And then he opened the book cautiously, fearing that he might rip the paper.



『I hope I can teach the later generations my teachings with this book, as I was unable to pass on my skills during my lifetime.』

This was the introduction of the book. It was written in a relatively clean, and beautiful style.

『Every kind of measurement that exists in the world is created by mankind. And using those measurements, humans are able to measure how heavy or how big an object is.

Words like inches, gallons, and such things translate the part of the world we live in into a form that humans can understand.』

It was quite an interesting subject. Cho Ryu Hyang already knew most of what the author was talking about.

Becoming well-versed in the art of measurements was one of the requirements a good king should possess, as the nation relied on it greatly to perform tasks.

Therefore, there were many books regarding measurements. Because of this, Cho Ryu Hyang knew quite a bit about measurements already. He turned to the next page of the book.

『So I hypothesized something.

If you can create measurements for everything in the world, was it not possible to do the same thing with numbers? Was it possible to perceive the world with numbers?』

Perceive the world with numbers? Cho Ryu Hyang's head spun when he read that.

It was an impossible task.

A senseless theory.

Usually, he would've stopped reading a book like this here. But the writing had a mysterious persuasive power to it. After thinking a bit more, Cho Ryu Hyang turned the page.

『Everyone thought I was being crazy.』

Cho Ryu Hyang looked like he took a hit. Didn't he, too, think that the author's ideas were crazy? He was only reading the book because the concept was amusing, not because it actually seemed plausible.

『But I didn't care.

Many of the revolutionaries in history was seen as a crazy person, anyways.』

It was a statement that made you see a little of the author's arrogance.

『Anyway, the first man created measurements with his body, and used it as a standard. One finger's length, or the length of one's hand. Or even the length of the arm, and etc. The standard measurements were created with the human body as a base. But the human body was too inconsistent to be used as a standard, so a measuring tool was created.』

The author was right about that.

Cho Ryu Hyang continued reading the next part.

『Following that, if the standard changed even by a little bit, the world would change tremendously.

Think about it, if on the ruler, the length of an inch changed even a little, wouldn't the length of a yard be affected tremendously?』

Cho Ryu Hyang thought about it a little.

Indeed, the world wouldn't be what it is now, if the measurements for the size and weight changed.

『This is what I want to talk about with the generations after me.

Everyone looks different, their personality is different, and their hobbies are different.

But because of that, anyone can become a standard, really.

Everyone's unique standard.

If you look at the world with that kind of worldview, it is easy to perceive the world in numbers. Therefore, I was able to reach that state.』

He reached it?

What does it mean?

『I was able to perceive the world in numbers.

And everything changed.

Every complications in the world, big or small, I was able to understand.

I was able to understand any algorithm with just a glance.

I was able to do anything that I would normally be unable to do.

I was able to move ten miles with a single step, and if I started running, I was able to fly up to the clouds.

I was able to control the weather itself, and everything around me was at the palm of my hands. I became a superhuman in an instant.』

Cho Ryu Hyang stopped and thought a bit.

Wasn't it enough to stop here? He was reading because this crazy talk was amusing to him, but reading more than this was dangerous. He could see that the author was getting more agitated. In the end, however, he was unable to close the book. He was curious what words the next page held.

『I thought there was no end to this power.

But I got stuck in a bottleneck at the most unexpected place.

I was unable to teach to others what I had learned.

Even if it was me, this was an extremely daunting task.

No one was able to understand what I was talking about.

I despaired.

And I only realized why no one was able to understand my words when I neared death. Because everyone's standard (worldview) was different, if I used my standard as the base of my teachings, no one except a person like me would be able to understand my teachings.

I realized that far too late.』

Cho Ryu Hyang turned the page with a straight face.

Why was this story in the mathematics section of the library?

Perhaps the book was sorted here only because it had the word “math” in it.

『I didn't want to be unable to pass on my teachings right after I gained insights, so I leave my teachings in text here.

In the future, I do not know if anyone would be able to become a superhuman by reading this, but with a thread of hope, I leave my teachings here.』

When he turned to the next page, he saw that the whole page was filled with numbers.

Then he realized. The reason why the book couldn't be copied was because of this numbers. No one could copy these numbers onto a different book when they didn't even know what the numbers meant. Then, something amazing happened while Cho Ryu Hyang was staring at the numbers.

“Hah?”

There was a pattern to the numbers.

When he realized that, his vision shook greatly.

No, was it more correct to say that his vision distorted?

“Eh?”

Cho Ryu Hyang took off his glasses, rubbed his eyes a bit, and looked at the book again.

And he became shocked.

The numbers in the pages looked like it was twisting a little bit, and they all mixed together to become one mass. When he was looking at the papers of the book with great concentration, the number mass changed into some other form in front of him.

A seemingly stubborn old man with a cold glare.

Cho Ryu Hyang was confused.

Was this not a piece of paper with just numbers on it before?

Then why did it turn into a drawing just now?

An even stranger thing happened next.

The old man in the book started talking.

[The idiots with fish eyes couldn't even tell what this treasure was. If you were able to find out what this was exactly, it would mean you have quite a bit of talent in this subject.]

“.....”

Cho Ryu Hyang was unable to speak, as he was too shocked to do

anything. The drawing spoke again.

[It was hard to write the book in such a way so that the little greenhorns were able to understand my theory, but it looks like it succeeded. Since you were able to see this, you have the right to take in my knowledge.]

The senior in the book looked at Cho Ryu Hyang with a piercing gaze.

The gaze was so lifelike, it made Cho Ryu Hyang tremble a little.

[Greenhorn, are you willing to take in my teachings?]

Cho Ryu Hyang realized then.

This was not a mere drawing. The old man in the paper was alive.

No, to be more specific, this was the consciousness of the author who lived in the past.

Even if it was just magic, it was an astounding feat. But according to the old man, this was math. The old man was staring at the boy without saying anything. Cho Ryu Hyang thought a bit under this heavy gaze, and opened his mouth.

“This young student is ignorant, so this one is unable to find out

who the great teacher is. I implore you to teach me your great name.”

Asking for a name politely from a book was a rather comical scene, but Cho Ryu Hyang was extremely serious at that point.

This was purely guesswork, but if there was such a person like this, surely he left a mark in history. He needed to know the name of the man in order to at least be a little calmer, so he needed to ask this question to the senior.

Thankfully, he got an answer immediately. The old man smirked, and opened his mouth.

[My name is Liang (亮), and as for my surname, it would be Zhuge (諸葛).]

Cho Ryu Hyang had a dazed look on his face.

The man in the paper was a much bigger existence than he realized.

Zhuge Liang (諸葛亮).

Was this not the name of the chancellor of the Shu Han, the legendary Zhuge Kongming?

‘This guy’s a crazy son of a bitch, huh?’

Cho Ryu Hyang thought this the moment he heard the name.

Zhuge Kongming.

If you look at the Three Kingdoms Book written by Luo Guanzhong, the chancellor of the Shu Han had a noble air about him the moment he appeared in the book.

Starting from Liu Bei's three visits, continuing to the battle of the Wuzhang Plains, and the event where he instructed his followers to use his own corpse to frighten away enemies. There were many famous stories originating from this man.

Was he not a person of great achievements, both in historical and realistic terms?

Most of his stories revolve around his genius strategies, but there were many other mysterious rumors about him that still existed to this date.

If one looks at the Battle of Red Cliffs, where Zhuge Liang was able to create the Three Heavenly Formation Strategy, there is a part where he reads the heavenly words in the sky, and changes the direction of the winds in order to win the battle.

Also, there are parts where he makes the Eight Diagram Formation to trap his enemies for an eternity. There might be some exaggerations in the story, but there are parts in the

Romance of The Three Kingdoms where it is implied that Zhuge Liang did indeed possess mystical powers. Therefore, even if it was a figure who existed several hundred years ago, his words had power in them. Because of that, Cho Ryu Hyang was doubtful if this man was indeed Zhuge Liang.

“Are you truly the chancellor of Shu Han, Zhuge Kongming?”

The old man’s cold, arrogant face underwent a great change for the first time. His face held a tinge of regret in it.

[Indeed. I am Shu Han’s Zhuge Kongming.]

Even though the individual himself confirmed it, it was quite hard to believe. This man was much, much bigger than Cho Ryu Hyang expected, after all.

He had his own doubts, but he decided act like he believed the man for now.

“Please pass on chancellor’s knowledge to this student.”

[I don’t have any reasons to be called chancellor by you, since I’m already dead, but it shouldn’t matter.]

Unlike what he said, however, the old man promoted Cho Ryu Hyang from a “Greenhorn” to a “you”, when Cho Ryu Hyang addressed him as “chancellor”. His expression returned to the one of arrogance a little later, and talked while covering his mouth

with a feather fan.

[I always liked a person with talent. I don't know what your personality is like, but you have a good talent. That's enough to qualify. Now, experience the truth I have attained in my lifetime.]

A light came out of the book all of the sudden.

Cho Ryu Hyang shivered a little when he felt that something was happening. The light changed into a 5-colored light and covered Cho Ryu Hyang's entire body.

“Wha, what's this?”

With extreme heat, an astounding amount of knowledge flooded into Cho Ryu Hyang's brain. It felt like someone forced open his head and poured in an immense amount of knowledge. When Cho Ryu Hyang was about to pass out from the intense pain in his head, he could hear the old man's voice.

[What I am passing onto you is neither Chi nor Technique. This is the heavenly truth of the world, so it will be a little hard for you to take it in right now, as you are a bit too young. But after a time, the powers in you will slowly awaken, so do not try to rush things.]

After Zhuge Liang finished speaking, the thread of consciousness Cho Ryu Hyang was holding onto snapped.

He fainted.

An immense amount of information that no one would be able to take in was forcefully shoved in. Looking at the collapsed child, the old man in the book talked.

[I will look at the world through your eyes.]

The man who revealed himself to be Zhuge Liang. He walked out of the book, and looked at Cho Ryu Hyang once. There were countless people who saw his book, but there were none who was able to understand it like this child did.

The talent bestowed by the heavens.

It was a different kind of talent he had, but it seemed this child had something akin to it.

[I don't know if it's alright to place my hopes on this boy.]

The old man's power was so great, even "superhuman" was unable to truly show how strong he was.

The power he left unto the world was equally great.

But even he didn't realize this great power would be given to a little child.

[That's what makes this all so amusing, though....]

The inability to see the future.

That's what made all this so interesting.

[I look forward to the future.]

He was unable to see the thing at the end, and died.

He was so close as to be able to touch it with his hands, but his age prevented him to reach it.

There was regret.

That's why he did something like this.

That's why he left his consciousness for the future generations.

He was being stubborn, for the first time in his life.

Chapter 3. The Academy That Turned Upside Down

When Cho Ryu Hyang had woken up, 10 days had gone by. When he first opened his eyes the first thing that entered his vision was an old, wrinkly man servant's face.

“....uurgh!”

“Ha, have you gained your senses, young master?”

Cho Ryu Hyang looked around absent-mindedly. He was very confused. His head was filled with knowledge everywhere, which was stuck in countless places in his mind. There was knowledge in his head he didn't have before. As he was organizing the knowledge in his mind, something happened.

The old manservant ran outside all of the sudden. There were series of loud sounds outside, and a huge fellow ran into the room. It was Peng Ga Ho.

“Cho Ryu Hyang, did you just wake up now?”

As soon as he came in, he grabbed a seat, and sat down. He took a look at Cho Ryu Hyang, and opened his mouth.

“It doesn't look like you're going to die any time soon.”

Cho Ryu Hyang smirked.

Peng Ga Ho didn't know this, but Cho Ryu Hyang right now was extremely healthy.

No, his body was actually suppressing an unknown power inside from bursting forth.



“How many days was I out?”

“You were out for ten days, you crazy bastard.”

“Ten days?!”

“You made us really worried. You know how anxious grandpa Jang got because of you? He probably sent word to the main house. You’re going to have a lot of fun with that.”

Cho Ryu Hyang’s face was full of shame.

Grandpa.

Grandpa Jang was someone who followed him all the way from the main house to serve him. Cho Ryu Hyang was extremely grateful towards grandpa Jang because of that. Even though they had a master-servant relationship, Cho Ryu Hyang held special feelings for grandpa. Thinking that the person was going to be reprimanded by his parents because of him, he felt sorry for grandpa.

“I’ll try my best talking to them.”

“If you’re a proper human being, it should be your duty to do so. He was making a huge fuss about it, calling me and the doctor and everything, just so that he could try save you.”

“He went that far?”

Cho Ryu Hyang cautiously started to lift up his upper body.

However, as soon as he tried, Peng Ga Ho stopped him and said:

“Just lie down for now. If you suddenly move after ten days, your muscles are going to get a shock.”

“.....Yeah. That might happen.”

Thinking about it, there was a need to know a bit more about what happened to his body . But it really was quite strange. He felt like he just lied down for a little bit, but ten days had already gone by?

“I was so surprised when I found you leaning against the wall, unconscious... speaking of, do you know this?”

“Know what?”

“You’re the first person in the history of the school to faint because of overwork in the library of all things. The first!”

Cho Ryu Hyang made a bitter smile.

He had nothing to say to that.

“I made you get worried for no reason.”

“Goddammit, even if you like books that much, how did you

manage to faint at that place of all things? I just don't understand you."

Cho Ryu Hyang didn't faint because of overwork, but he didn't feel like explaining.

It was because Cho Ryu Hyang himself was still confused if the event that took place in the library was real or not.

"Just rest here. I'll go call the doctor and then I'll leave."

"Okay."

Peng Ga Ho was about to leave when he stopped by the door.

He hesitated a bit, and then he opened his mouth.

".....Stop worrying me like that. You and your weak body..."

"....."

Cho Ryu Hyang couldn't find an appropriate response.

The reason was because Peng Ga Ho came at him at both warmly, and yet struck him heavily. Only after the doctor came in to check up on him, and prescribed him a few medicines, was he able to be truly alone.

“What’s this?”

There were immense changes going on in his body.

Could Cho Ryu Hyang truly use the mystical powers and perform miracles, just like what the book said? When he thought about that, Cho Ryu Hyang’s head got jumbled up a bit. Cho Ryu Hyang always thought that his rationality and logicalness was his strongest points. After attaining a power that he himself couldn’t explain with words, however, his mind became chaotic. But what weighed on his mind the most currently was not this.

“What’s this?”

Since awhile ago, something, or someone, in his head was unraveling the knowledge packed inside his brain in a way that Cho Ryu Hyang could understand scarily fast. It felt like some kind of an entity was teaching him about these newfound knowledge, step by step. It was a interesting experience. As soon as questions popped up in his mind, it was answered almost at the same time. It was definitely weird.

Cho Ryu Hyang closed his eyes. The moment he did so, a figure popped out in his mind.

‘The old man in the picture!’

The old man looked at Cho Ryu Hyang in an arrogant way.

It seemed that this old man was the one that was explaining everything to him.

[Have you come to your senses, greenhorn?]

It was a type of communication where words were transferred directly into his brain, instead of being transferred by sound.

Cho Ryu Hyang hesitated a little, then opened his mouth and replied.

“Yes, chancellor.”

The old man smirked at him.

“You don’t even believe that I am Zhuge Liang, and yet you lie about it with a straight face.”

Cho Ryu Hyang’s face went red with the old man’s words.

It seemed like the old man could read Cho Ryu Hyang’s mind because he was in his mind.

If it’s like this, Cho Ryu Hyang was unable to lie to him.

It’s a little troublesome.

“To be honest, it’s a hard to believe....”

Cho Ryu Hyang quickly stopped himself from shouting ‘Don’t lie!’ in his mind.

Unexpectedly, the old man’s face implied that he didn’t really care about Cho Ryu Hyang’s attitude.

[Doesn’t matter. A person’s name and status in actuality just a meaningless cloak. Anyway, the time we will be able to spend talking to each other won’t be long, at least for now.]

For now? Does that mean they would be able to talk in great lengths in the future?

When that question floated into Cho Ryu Hyang’s mind, the old man immediately answered him.

[Good question. Yes. Like you just thought, we will be able to talk in great lengths in the future. But that won’t happen any time soon.]

Even though he didn’t really ask the old man the question, the old man answered immediately.

This was actually quite convenient.

[You're body is still developing, so there will be some problems that appear when using the powers I gave you, but that can't really be solved right now.]

What abilities were there?

When Cho Ryu Hyang wondered this, the old man replied.

[Are you curious, child?]

Of course he was curious.

If what the book said was true, then he would be able to walk great distances, and fly, even. These powers would indeed help him out a lot in life.

Did the old man read his thoughts?

The old man's face grew stern.

[Your greed is indeed really amazing. Child, why are you trying to just take this information from me? Based on how hard you train in the future, the abilities you acquire will differ.]

Then was there no ability at all?

Cho Ryu Hyang became a little disappointed. The old man then

smiled in a mysterious way, and said this.

[For a child, you polished up your math skills quite nicely. If you go outside, you'll be able to see a whole new world.]

What did this mean?

Cho Ryu Hyang felt sleepy all of the sudden, and started falling asleep then.

Watching this, the old man complained a little.

[So this is the limit so far. It takes far too much power for you to talk to me right now.]

The old man wasn't really satisfied with it, but he couldn't do anything about it.

After all, it was a blessing to even acquire a child like this. The old man resolved himself by telling himself that the boy would be quite all right once he trained him. He had high expectations for this child.

“Did you try finding it out?”

“Yes. But it became more complicated than I imagined, your

holiness.”

“Why?”

“The person your holiness is trying to find, the number one in mathematics, is actually located at the imperial palace.”

“The imperial palace?”

“Yes, your holiness.”

A great hall.

In the middle of this hall, there was a finely dressed official, and a lean middle-aged man. The middle aged man had a playful, harmless look on his face. If a person actually knew who this man was, no one would actually dare to look down on him.

This man was the pope of the current Heavenly Demon God’s Church, and a member of the 15 guests of the land (三皇五帝七君). He was one of the 3 sovereigns, even. And this man was the Dark Emperor, Gongson Chun Gi (公孫天器) .

“Damn it, things really did get complicated.”

Gongson Chun Gi licked his lips, as if he felt inconvenienced by this whole affair.

Looking at that, the man dressed in red carefully said this.

“If this one moves, he will be able to bring the man in.”

“Really now? Are you going to jump over the palace walls or something?”

“If you wish for me to do so, I will gladly do it.”

When the man said this with absolute loyalty in his voice, Gongson Chun Gi shook his head after contemplating on the man’s statement a little.

“No, it’s fine. We shouldn’t overexert ourselves. Getting ourselves tangled with the imperial palace isn’t really good.”

It was regrettable, but Gongson Chun Gi decided to not go for it.

It wasn’t as if there weren’t any other ways to do this, anyways.

“Do we have a backup? We have one, right?”

The red man replied immediately.

“Of course.”

“Who is it?”

“Other than the man known as the number one in math, Ju Ho Yu (周虎柳), there is the former number one, known as Jo Gi Chun, who retired recently.”

“Jo Gi Chun? Where’s that guy at?”

“He is currently teaching children at an establishment known as ‘Theoretical Maths and Martial Arts School’.”

“‘Theoretical Maths and Martial Arts School’? What’s that?”

“It’s an academy located at the Shan Xi province. It was an academy created for rich clans, and is known to be the biggest of its kind.”

“Really? Then why am I hearing it for the first time?”

“It’s in the Shan Xi province, and it doesn’t have too much to do with martial arts, it seems. It is famous for academics, but not martial arts, so the main church didn’t pay attention to it.”

“I see. Then lets use that guy. He seems alright.”

“Should this one..... bring Jo Gi Chun here?”

“Yes. He seems alright. He’s retired too, so he probably doesn’t have too much to do right now, anyways, right? Yeah, it’d be

perfect to use him.”

Gongson Chun Gi had a satisfied expression on his face.

“With his level, he should be able to see through the formation, right?”

“Rather than the formation itself, there are the strange equations one must solve, which is why we need him. He should be able to figure it out by himself.”

“I didn’t know this damned main church had so little talented individuals.”

The red man had a sorry look on his face when Gongson Chun Gi complained.

“By what time can this Jo Gi Chun arrive?”

“If this one goes himself, this one will be able to accomplish feat in a month.”

“Take a few guys just as insurance. And leave your other jobs to Sam Bi (三秘) before you leave.”

“This one will do that before this one leaves.”

“As you know, you have to do this as fast as possible. It’d be bad if this information gets leaked to the public. You know what I’m talking about, right?”

“Affirmative.”

When the man in red set out, Gongson Chun Gi sighed once, and spoke.

“Yo, Gyum, what do you think?”

–Excuse me, but I do not understand what you are referring to...

“What do you think about me going through all this mess just for one martial arts technique?”

–Isn’t it something that’s worth that much?

“Worth my ass. Is martial arts anything special? There’s a difference between heaven and earth based on who trains in it.”

The man in the darkness.

The bishop Lim Hak Gyum, who was the leader of the the pope’s personal guards, Mara’s Heavenly Wind Division, made a bitter smile. This was a man who could be said to have the world’s strongest martial art. That’s why he was unable to say anything when the pope said he didn’t care about the martial art’s value.

“Phew, who am I to try to see more glory at this age. Just because of this one technique, I have to think about this and that, and move around everywhere. I’m tired as hell. I might really just faint from stress at this rate.”

–Why not pass on the task to the elders and return the the private chamber to take a rest?

Gongson Chun Gi trembled.

“You want me to pass on this dangerous task to those narrow-minded fools? They’re just gonna pour all kinds of insults from the back if I do that. Yeah, I’ll just think of myself as a volunteer doing this for free.”

Lim Hak Gyum laughed silently in his mind.

The pope did all he could for the church, even when he was complaining about this and that.

Even though he possessed a strength greater than anyone else, he never showed off, and instead lowered himself to other’s levels and talked to them with care. He was truly the role model for a pope.

“Moon Edge Blade, was it? Why do we need it for the church, anyways? Don’t we have plenty of techniques in the church already?”

–A dangerous thing such as that, if it goes in the hands of anyone else, I’m afraid they’ll simply use it to bully others. It is better if we kept it in our hands.

Gongson Chun Gi sighed. It wasn’t one of those playful sighs he threw around everywhere. It was a serious one.

“Of course I know that. But I don’t know why I just don’t feel like doing it.”

–.....

“Is it because I’m old now? I just keep on getting more and more paranoid. Feels like something big’s going to happen in the future.”

The pope spoke while massaging his own shoulder.

“Hey, Gyum.”

–Yes, your holiness, please speak.

“As you know, I really don’t like bothersome things.”

Gongson Chun Gi laughed as he said that.

He was annoying, bothersome, and he really hated things that

required a lot of things to be done. In fact, he avoided it like a plague.

He even shortened techniques in the “Shura Sector” (修羅幻經), which had several hundreds of techniques, to ten techniques, just because it was too bothersome to learn all of them.

Thanks to that, the already powerful Shura Sector had its power multiplied by 4 times.

Lim Hak Gyum believed that if Gongson Chun Gi actually sought to be the strongest, and actually tried to do it, he would’ve been able to conquer all under the heavens. This man had that much talent.

“Damn it, if you actually look at it, once you become a pope, you don’t have to do these kind of things, right? I thought that was the case and took on the role of the pope from my teacher. But recently, I’m beginning to think that my teacher just swindled me into inheriting his role.”

–.....Your follower is too dull-witted to be able to be of any help. I apologize.

“No, no, I wasn’t talking about that. I mean...”

Gongson Chun Gi stretched his neck a bit, thought a bit while doing so, then spoke.

“Anyways, there’s been a lot of things that’s on my mind recently. I wish to retire to the private chamber as fast as I can.”

–It shall be as you say.

The school.

At the meeting room of the school, multitudes of scholars were debating about something.

“There’s a student who is being suspected of cheating at the recent competition.”

“Cheating?”

“Jo Gi Chun, I’m sure you know who I am talking about.”

An elder with an air of dignity about him. He was Eu Hyun Guk (遊絃局), the teacher of ancient Chinese literature. He looked Jo Gi Chun, and spoke up. But Jo Gi Chun simply responded with a quizzical face.

“What do you mean?”

“Don’t you know already? The boy who took first place at the competition. That boy. When are you going to punish him?”

Jo Gi Chun.

He was a man who wouldn't even twitch if a lightning struck a boulder right next to him. His face contorted in disgust when he heard that.

It was true that Cho Ryu Hyang taking first place took Jo Gi Chun by surprise. But there was no cheating involved in any of it. Jo Gi Chun knew this better than anyone else, so he was confused about why this matter had to come up, now of all times.

“What are you going to do about this problem, Jo Gi Chun? Are you preparing something for the child?”

“Hmm.....”

Eu Hyun guk.

Jo Gi Chun was able to figure out why this scholar was acting this way. He understood why the man did it, too. For people who didn't know mathematics as well as he, Cho Ryu Hyang's feat might indeed seem like an impossible task.

“Please say something about this. Is it not your subject? This bothers me greatly.”

Discussing all this in public, it seemed the old scholar came with

great resolve. Many of the students became very sensitive to cheating recently. When talking about such things, one must refrain from talking about it in public. When he was about to speak, the calligraphy teacher, Jo Yu Chun (調柳川), wormed his way into the conversation.

“Thinking about it, it was indeed strange. You sure the fellow didn’t do something strange? If not that, the boy might’ve gotten ahold of the answer sheets.”

“That might indeed be possible.”

Eu Hyun Guk agreed with him wholeheartedly.

The problem they were discussing at the present had to do with Cho Ryu Hyang’s answer sheet.

No, it wasn’t the perfect score the boy got that was the problem. It was the time that was the real problem.

Everyone was given two hours time to work on the test.

Most people weren’t even able to solve all the problem within this time frame, but Cho Ryu Hyang was different. He solved over a hundred problems in less than an hour’s time.

This was only possible if someone actually went and memorized the answer sheet, at least in normal people’s eyes.

At first, when the test overseers saw Cho Ryu Hyang turning in the paper first, they thought the boy gave up. Jo Gi Chun's face turned normal again after drinking a cup of tea.

"I see no problems regarding this matter."

"Are you serious? Even the genius Nangong Yubin is unable to solve all those problems in one hour."

Jo Gi Chun tilted his head in curiosity.

"What does he have to do with anything?"

"No, nothing. I was just setting an example. But think about it. Is it even possible to solve all these problems in just 1 hour?"

All the other scholars nodded their head in agreement, except for Jo Gi Chun.

Since everyone else was thinking like this, the man wasn't even mad.

These men did not know. These men did not know how deep the subject of mathematics was.

The people here only got along with Jo Gi Chun because they had to work together, but in reality, they looked down on the subject of

mathematics. Jo Gi Chun already knew about this.

The art that only lowly merchants learned. They believed mathematics to just be a play with numbers. This was how the rest of the world viewed math.

That's why Jo Gi Chun believed that these scholars had such a reaction.

"If one has talent in this area, and focuses on it, this feat is indeed possible."

"Hoho, then do you truly believe a 11 year old boy was able to solve all these problems in that short of a timeframe?"

"Of course."

Jo Gi Chun's was being very assertive about it.

In fact, he, too, could accomplish this feat by himself.

He didn't know about anyone else, but even now, when he retired from his job, he was able to solve problems of this caliber in an instant. Of course, this was only a result of countless days of hard work.

The fact that Cho Ryu Hyang was able to do this surprised Jo Gi Chun, too. But he did believe that the boy achieved this with his

own skills. If the boy did work as hard as he, would there not be results to show for it?

But no one in the room seemed to think that way. They only thought that they were right, and no one listened to Jo Gi Chun's own opinion.

"I refuse to believe it. I demand a retest for him."

Jo Gi Chun couldn't figure out why they had to go to such lengths for just this.

But he decided to think about it calmly, for now.

"There really is no need to do such a thing. The results won't change."

Even if they held another test, the result was going to be the same.

There really was no need to take a retest then, was there?

It was just a waste of time.

Jo Gi Chun really didn't like to waste his time.

"It's not just me. The students are unable to accept the results,

either. Quite a bit of students came to me to talk about his. That's why I am talking to you about this."

Jo Gi Chun finally understood why there was so much pressure from the teachers.

If even the scholars deemed this feat impossible, wouldn't students think that way as well?

The boy who seemed to have given up on the test got first place.

And he was the youngest child in the whole school, to boot!

'How foolish.'

It was a useless sense of inferiority.

Jo Gi Chun wasn't the type of person to expend his energy to get emotional. It just wasn't in his nature. Getting first place in the school in a certain subject brought many benefits. One could get a scholarship, and a private room for studying.

Was it because of that? Many of the students that first came here studied as if their life depended on it. They fought each other for the top spot, which had an immense effect on the school.

But after the appearance of Nangong Yubin, it all changed.

Since the boy took first place in every single subject in the school, other students started to feel inferior compared to him.

The scholars in charge of their own subjects became very worried. How could they escape from this predicament? They tried to mentor various students at first. It was to get someone else to take first place, instead of Nangong Yubin. But it all failed.

Nangong Yubin was a genius of all geniuses.

When the scholars were just about to give up, Cho Ryu Hyang just rolled in and took first place in math.

It was a strange thing. They thought Jo Gi Chun did something behind their backs. As the man liked to stay alone, the scholars misunderstood the man's personality. Jo Gi Chun too realized how the scholars were looking at it. They weren't doubting Cho Ryu Hyang, the student. No, they were doubting the teacher, Jo Gi Chun.

‘This place is no different from that place.’

He saw people like this in the imperial court, too.

Was it like this wherever people lived?

The scholars were using a fairly simple strategy on him, but he just went with it.

As long as he could study math, he was willing to let some things pass. This was one of those moments.

“You say you want a retest?”

“Indeed. All the teachers oversee the test, and you will make the questions on the spot, and have the boy solve it.”

Jo Gi Chun nodded.

Eu Hyun Guk, the man who addressed this problem. Jo Gi Chun was very well aware that this man did not like him. Because Jo Gi Chun was a person who was hard to get along with, and was antisocial in general, he sometimes treated others coldly. He didn't realize it would all come back to him in a way like this, but what's done is done.

“Fine, do what you want.”

“Are you fine with doing it tomorrow?”

It wasn't a hard task.

“Of course.”

And that's how Cho Ryu Hyang's retest was set.

Chapter 4. Cho Ryu Hyang's Retest

The first thing Cho Ryu Hyang heard when he woke up distressed him.

“I heard you were having a retest.”

Cho Ryu Hyang felt that there was another meaning to Peng Ga Ho's statement by instinct.

Sure enough, Peng Ga Ho immediately spoke with an annoyed tone.

“They said you were cheating during the test. Unbelievable.”

Peng Ga Ho was angry. He knew Cho Ryu Hyang got first place in the competition with pure skill. Would one not be angry if someone accused him/her of cheating, when he/she accomplished something with their own power? Because of that, Peng Ga Ho was furious at that moment.

“Why aren't you saying anything?”

Cho Ryu Hyang was unexpectedly calm. No, he looked like he didn't even care about it.

It wasn't time to be concerned about such petty things. He was more concerned with the strange things that were floating in front

of him.

Because Cho Ryu Hyang was unable to take his eyes off these objects, he looked like he was in a dazed state to Peng Ga Ho when he talked.

“.....That kind of test, I can always retake it.”

“Aren’t you angry? They’re accusing you!”

“Of course I’m angry.”

“An angry person has that kind of look on his face?”

Cho Ryu Hyang wasn’t being angry because there was no point in being that way. He disliked doing fruitless activities like such.

“I’m the one who’s getting pissed off.”

Peng Ga Ho smashed his chest with his fist in anger.

Peng Ga Ho admitted that Cho Ryu Hyang was indeed a genius. He also knew that this genius always worked ceaselessly.

That made him even angrier. The current situation where no one even recognized the amount of time Cho Ryu Hyang put into study, but even dared to look down upon it, made Peng Ga Ho

furious.

Peng Ga Ho put his hand on Cho Ryu Hyang's shoulder, and spoke seriously.

“Since it's already like this, just go smash the old men's noses in. Show off all of your skills.”

Cho Ryu Hyang smiled.

He knew why Peng Ga Ho was being so angry. And even if he didn't say it, it was his every intention to rub his skill in their faces.

Cho Ryu Hyang, too, was bothered by the actions of the school, after all.

“You're alright, right? You wouldn't have any trouble at the retest tomorrow?”

“I'm alright.”

Right now, his physical condition wasn't what was important.

The strange things that he was seeing from before. It was bothering him to no end.

It was numbers. There were numbers floating in the air everywhere.

“You need books? Want paper?”

Cho Ryu Hyang was thankful towards Peng Ga Ho for rushing to him right from school after receiving word of his recovery, but right now, he wanted to be alone.

There were too many things to think about right now.

Compared to the things he had in mind, the test was a small matter.

‘It’s an easy task.’

It didn’t matter if he had to retake the test several times.

The importance of figuring out what these numbers were was far more important.

Peng Ga Ho, who was unable to vent all his anger, went out while complaining by himself.

Watching that, Cho Ryu Hyang closed his eyes. He called upon the old man in his mind. He couldn’t decide on what to call the old man, as he still was unable to decide if the old man really was Zhuge Liang.

‘Sir, I have a question.’

[You bother me.]

The old man appeared in his thoughts, and stared at him with a face of contempt.

Cho Ryu Hyang, looking at the old man, asked a question.

‘What are these numbers that I am seeing?’

[What do you think they are?]

‘I do not know.’

The numbers were everywhere, and they were constantly changing.

What did they mean?

Cho Ryu Hyang’s curiosity sparked just then.

He opened his eyes a little, and tried to touch the number near him with his hands. Then the colorless number took on a lifelike color.

“Ah?”

The number immediately became colorless again.

“Wha, what’s this?”

Cho Ryu Hyang closed his eyes in confusion.

[Simpleton, you can only see the numbers at your current level. If you want to touch them, you need to train yourself, so don’t be greedy.]

‘What training to I need? What will I be able to do if I become able to touch the numbers?’

[Hoho, a boy who can’t even walk already dreams of running.]

The old man clicked his tongue, looking at the agitated boy.

[You yourself represents one of the smaller numbers that make up the whole universe. But the universe was created from the small numbers like you gathering together to become one. Right now, what you have to do is to be able to feel and sense those numbers around you. Performing tasks with the numbers come next.]

Looking at the numbers, no, to be specific, the old man taught Cho Ryu Hyang the way to be able to be able to correctly look at

the origins of the world.

The Faultless View of The World (正觀法)

This was the first skill Cho Ryu Hyang inherited from the old man.

“mm....”

Eu Hyun Guk frowned.

It was good to have the test done in public.

Make the questions on the spot, and make him solve it on the spot. There were no possibilities of cheating.

This was a bit troubling. The child just solved all the problems with ease. There were not even the slightest bit of hesitation in his writings.



“This is truly amazing.”

“Indeed.”

Was his name Cho Ryu Hyang? He was only 11.

Eu Hyun Guk couldn't understand why the child stubbornly stuck to mathematics with that kind of talent.

While he did look down on math, he did not look down on its difficulty. But in daily life, wasn't it enough to just be able to calculate living expenses? He didn't know why one had to memorize all these complicated equations and such.

Isn't it truly foolish?

Mathematicians devoted their lives on a pointless subject and wasted their time away.

This was what most of the population thought, and this was why many looked down on math.

"I'm done."

Jo Gi Chun took up Cho Ryu Hyang's answer sheet with his, and showed it to the teachers.

Their answer sheets matched perfectly.

All the students that were watching nodded their heads in shock.

It seemed that everyone except Cho Ryu Hyang and his acquaintances doubted his skills.

In all honesty, how could they believe it? The answers were answers, but at that solving speed?

“I don’t think there are any more complaints that can be made, no?”

When Jo Gi Chun said this, Eu Hyun Guk nodded with a unsatisfied expression. He turned to Cho Ryu Hyang after doing so.

“I hear you study math, and only math. Is this true?”

“It is.”

“Why do you study such a thing? With that kind of talent, you should be able to make it big in the subjects that I teach. Earning fame shouldn’t be too difficult if you studied some other skill instead.”

Cho Ryu Hyang had a dumb expression on his face for a while, but he immediately recomposed himself, and glanced at Jo Gi Chun.

To say such a thing right in front of someone who devoted himself to math all his life... Even if they didn’t like each other, this was too much,

However, Jo Gi Chun’s face did not change one bit. From the start, he wasn’t one to display his emotions outright.

But Cho Ryu Hyang was furious. He didn’t know why, but he was just furious.

Cho Ryu Hyang put on his calm face, and opened his mouth.

“There is someone I respect. I wish to follow the path he treaded.”

Eu Hyun Guk’s face turned ugly.

“Could it be that person studied mathematics?”

“Indeed.”

“I pity your talent. How foolish, how foolish!”

Eu Hyun Guk sighed in sorrow.

It really was appealing.

To think there was a genius like Nangong Yubin! He wished to take the boy and teach him everything he knew.

But since the boy himself said that he didn’t want it, he couldn’t even say anything. Indeed, one could take his cattle to a river, but it wasn’t possible to force the cattle to drink.

Cho Ryu Hyang bowed a little towards Eu Hyun Guk.

He really disliked this man. At a public area, in front of so many students, how could he insult a fellow teacher like that?

‘Was mathematics looked down upon this much?’

To think even a scholar like Eu Hyun Guk would act like this towards it. Cho Ryu Hyang smiled a bitter smile.

And he looked at Eu Hyun Guk’s forehead at a glance.

A faint number was stuck onto Eu Hyun Guk’s forehead.

“.....Thirty two.”

Cho Ryu Hyang whispered to himself.

Jo Gi Chun, who was standing next to Cho Ryu Hyang, heard what he said, but since he didn’t realize the significance of Cho Ryu Hyang’s words, didn’t do anything.

He later opened his mouth while looking at Cho Ryu Hyang.

“You can go rest now. You had to do something troublesome this time...”

“It’s okay.”

It was indeed troublesome, but it was worth it. There was no one who would doubt his mathematical skills now. Life would be a little more comfortable now.

Cho Ryu Hyang took a step back, and took a breather.

He inhaled slowly for a long time, and exhaled fast, and rapidly. Then he took a look at all the teacher's faces. And lastly, he looked upon Jo Gi Chun and smiled a bit.

It was as expected.

“Seventy one.”

He turned back, and walked away.

A lone crane was bound to be bullied in a flock of crows.

The numbers that portrayed the worth of a human being.

Cho Ryu Hyang respected Jo Gi Chun even before he gained his powers. At first, Cho Ryu Hyang only respected him because of his title, but now, he respected the man's whole self. The man's passion for math didn't decline even as he aged.

He even went through all this torture just to pass on his art to his students.

The fact that he was able to take on all the insults regarding math, and taught the students who didn't know math well, was naturally admirable.

He didn't know about other subjects, but regarding math, it became more and more profound as one got deeper into it. And Cho Ryu Hyang believed that his knowledge regarding math became more profound.

The knowledge the strange old man gave him truly did help him learn math faster, after all.

While Cho Ryu Hyang was thinking about this and that while he walked towards the dorm, Jo Gi Chun approached him from behind.

“Can you come find me some time later?”

“When?”

“Whenever you are free is fine.”

“Alright.”

Jo Gi Chun nodded, and left to do his own thing.

Looking at that figure, Cho Ryu Hyang thought a bit.

Perhaps the teacher had a better view of him thanks to today's events.

‘I might just be imagining things, though.’

Cho Ryu Hyang always had to suffer through punishments during lectures because of Peng Ga Ho.

It might be just his imagination, but he thought he saw a hint of benevolence in teacher's eyes.

‘Let's not hope for such things just yet.’

As he shook off that thought and walked out, he encountered someone waiting for him at the doorway.

“Congrats, math genius.”

It was someone he didn't expect to see at all.

Cho Ryu Hyang looked at the person in front of him, with suspicion in his eyes.

“Don't look at me like that, this event didn't have anything to do with me.”

Nangong Yubin.

He was the child of the famous Nangong clan, and was called the greatest genius in the history of the school. To think this child, who he never exchanged words with, would congratulate him. Cho Ryu Hyang didn't know how to respond to that.

And when he focused on his eyes and used his skill out of curiosity, he was genuinely shocked.

“74.....”

It was an astronomical number.

Most people had a value of 20-30... Nangong Yubin possessed a value about 3 times as much as other people did.

He didn't know how that number got there, but if one was to simply look at it, Nangong Yubin had a talent that outstripped even Jo Gi Chun.

Perhaps there really were geniuses in the world.

“Actually, I was also one of those people that had doubts about your skills. I came to apologize for that.”

He was doing pointless things, Cho Ryu Hyang thought.

Cho Ryu Hyang didn't know how to respond to such an action, so

he just looked at Nangong Yubin with a slightly anxious face.

It seemed that his action brought great distress to the boy, so he panicked a little and spoke.

“No, to be a little more truthful, today’s test probably happened because I complained a little. I came to apologize about that.”

“.....”

“The people around me doubted your skills, and I, too, doubted you. I think that somehow got into Eu Hyun Guk’s ear. Things became complicated because of that. Sorry.”

Now Cho Ryu Hyang realized why this fellow waited for him here.

And he was shocked once again.

Were all children in famous clans like this?

It was an apology that didn’t even need to happen. The boy also knew that, but he came to apologize anyway.

“If it’s for that, I’ll accept your apology.”

There was no reason to reject it.

It wasn't anything troublesome to him anyway.

But it seemed Nangong Yubin didn't think that way.

His face turned into that of relief the moment he heard Cho Ryu Hyang's reply.

A face that implied he just got a load off his back.

“For real? You're accepting it?”

“.....yeah.”

“Fu~ That's a relief.”

Cho Ryu Hyang was confused about what relieved him.

“I was actually really nervous, since it was my first time doing something like this.”

Nangong Yubin had a grin on his face as he said that.

“It was my first time seeing a genius, so I was curious, too.”

Cho Ryu Hyang fixed his glasses with an embarrassed expression.

He was being called a genius by a genius like Nangong Yubin. It made him feel a little awkward.

“I hope we get along in the future. I hoped to have a rival like you.”

“.....Did you, now.”

Cho Ryu Hyang suddenly felt uncomfortable.

The fact that the boy was approaching him all of the sudden like this weirded him out a little.

“I’m not going to lose next time. I was caught off guard this time, you know.”

Nangong Yubin smiled, showing his white teeth in the process.

“I’ll be expecting a lot from you next time, rival.”

Nangong Yubin disappeared after saying everything.

Cho Ryu Hyang watched the boy walk away in a daze for a while, then fixed his glasses, while uttering a few words under his breath.

“He might have a really shameless personality, seeing that he was

able to say such a cheesy phrase like that.....”

He was a boy that Cho Ryu Hyang couldn’t understand.

Cho Ryu Hyang walked slowly.

His legs naturally drew him to the library.

“Ah? Is your body alright today?”

The guard at the entrance of the library asked Cho Ryu Hyang worriedly.

Cho Ryu Hyang didn’t know if this was a banter or not, but he just said that he was alright, and entered the library building. And he looked for a certain book for a long time. The thing that was weighing on his mind for a while. He needed to confirm it.

‘There it is.’

The item he was looking for was found faster than he expected. That was because he could see the book where it was put last time.

As he pulled out the book, he could clearly see the name written on it.

『Moon Edge Flower Algorithm Magic (1)』

He didn't realize last time, but it seemed that there were two volumes to this book.

He opened the book carefully.

And his eyes widened in surprise.

‘As expected.....’

The contents of the book were wiped clean. No, to be more accurate, everything within the book, every single word, was gone. It was as if someone just forcefully dragged out all the characters in the book and threw it away.

‘Did everything in the book get inserted into my brain?’

Even now, if he thought of something, he could feel the immense amount of knowledge swimming through his brain. His brain was filled with decades of research at once.

But it was a useless thing.

To make the knowledge actually something that he could comprehend and use, it required a tremendous amount of work.

While he was thinking, he suddenly came up with a question, and shut his eyes immediately.

‘Is there a second volume to this book?’

[There is.]

Cho Ryu Hyang felt that he knew the answer even before he asked the answer.

It was actually a question he should’ve asked a long time back, but he just remembered to ask it now.

‘Does that book also contain elder’s great knowledge?’

[Child, it seems you are mistaken about something.]

‘Mm? What’s that?’

Was there something about his question he didn’t know about?

[Idiots needs an idiot’s language to understand things.]

It was a riddle-like phrase.

The old man spoke again a little after he said that.

[You think there are many who trained their mathematical skills

to the point of being able to comprehend my knowledge?]

Cho Ryu Hyang contemplated upon that a bit.

Truly, an existence like him was rare. But he also felt that there were indeed more like him in the world.

There were many people like Jo Gi Chun, who dedicated their life to math, after all.

The old man affirmed his thoughts coolly.

[You're right. There are indeed more like you. But what are the chances of them reading this one book? I presumed that there was almost no possibility for them to come across this. So as a backup, I created another text.]

The old man stopped there for a moment, and made a bitter smile.

And he changed the subject a little.

[I saw your performance at the stage today. It seems there still are a lot of idiots that look down on math.]

Cho Ryu Hyang scratched his head and smiled.

It seemed that the old man felt the same way he did.

The art of math was being neglected too much, past or the present.

It was something he was able to experience firsthand today.

[If I wrote my knowledge down on paper with numbers, of course these uneducated fools wouldn't understand it. So I kindly wrote down my knowledge with letters and gave them what they wanted.]

What they wanted?

When Cho Ryu Hyang became curious, the old man answered immediately.

[The formation techniques. This is what I have given to my descendants.]

Cho Ryu Hyang was finally able to understand what the old man was talking about.

An idiot's language for the idiots.

It seemed this was why he wrote the first book with numbers, and the second book with letters. A way to preserve his knowledge, even a little.

The old man smiled.

It was an evil smile that didn't really fit the image of the old man.

[But there is a big difference between knowing how to catch a fish, and understanding how to handle a fish.]

Cho Ryu Hyang blinked a few times. He didn't understand what the old man was talking about.

[You'll understand the meaning behind my words in the future.]

Cho Ryu Hyang didn't realize.

He didn't realize that it would take him decades till he finally understood what the old man meant...

Right then, his head spun and his body lost all the strength it had before.

‘Oops!’

Cho Ryu Hyang opened his eyes quickly, and leaned his body against the library wall to regain his breath.

Talking with the old man took up too much power. It wasn't easy

to handle it yet.

Whilst recovering his body from the talk, Cho Ryu Hyang looked around the library. There were still many books to be read, but that was useless to him now. It wasn't like those books would help him increase his powers, anyway.

It might've seemed like a boast to others, but Cho Ryu Hyang already had more than enough knowledge about math. Perhaps too much.

But there was something missing.

It seemed that missing something wasn't just some simple knowledge.

He didn't know what it was, but he had an endless desire to learn that something.

After thinking by himself a little more, Cho Ryu Hyang put the book back into the shelf and stood up. He forgot about the promise to visit the teacher. He decided to go resolve it now.

Little did he know that that event would change the course of his life greatly.

Chapter 5. You Can't Stop Peng Ga Ho~

Peng Ga Ho was staring at his uncle, Peng Ryun Hui. He was a little confused.

“What? The Demon Church?”

What's up with this all of the sudden?

“Yeah, someone picked up on their movements, so now the martial world is in an uproar.”

The title ‘Demon Church’ held enormous weight in the martial world. Because of this, Peng Ga Ho swallowed his spit out of nervousness.

“The people of the church are making their move, yet there's no counter measures from the Alliance?”

“Did you really think we wouldn't do anything about this?”

“Then what are we doing?”

Peng Ryun Hui had a faint smile on this face.

“Our leader's going to use the Sword Emperor Flag (劍皇旗). He's really determined to win this fight.”

“The Sword Emperor Flag?”

“Mm. It’s been approximately 10 years since it was last used.”

The Sword Emperor Flag.

The greatest power which the chief of the Alliance, Dao Emperor Baek Mu Ryang, could wield. If the flag was to be used, all the clans under the Alliance must have total obedience towards the chief’s orders.

It was an object that could only be used once every decade, it wasn’t something that one could use on a whim. But once it came out, the Alliance was able to display their full potential.

“Thanks to that, the main house is sending 150 warriors, including me. I just dropped by to see you on the way to battle.”

Peng Ga ho had an unsatisfied look on his face. He clicked his tongue, and asked a question.

“Uncle.”

“What?”

“Can’t you take me there as well? My skills have grown a lot. I can even see the path of the sword, now.”

“You want me to take you with me? With that kind of skill?”

“Yeah.”

Peng Ryun Hui, seeing his nephew's stubborn face, waved his hand to silence him.

“Don't. You're just a snot-nosed brat. What kind of insults will I have to take if I take you with me? You think big bro's just going to sit there if I take you? I'm going to get beat up on the spot. Even if big bro's the clan chief, don't you think it would be humiliating if I got beat up in public?”

“What? Dad is going there as well? Why?”

“Of course he's going. Why'd the clan chief exclude himself from an event as big as this?”

When Peng Ga Ho heard his uncle's response, his face sank.

“Dang it, shouldn't the Chief protect the clan? Why's he going around doing all this?”

“You rascal, did you think we didn't place any guard in the main house? Also, the chief is only coming out because this event could potentially decide the fate of the clan.”

Peng Ga Ho tilted his head in confusion.

“What do you mean, our clan’s fate could be decided by this? It’s not like the Demon Church can strike the main house, right? I mean, that should be geographically impossible.”

Peng Ryun Hui, after scanning the area by using his martial sense to confirm no one was around, whispered to Peng Ga Ho.

“This is a top secret matter, so I shouldn’t be telling you this, but I suppose it would be better if you knew.”

Peng Ga Ho’s eyes sparkled. He instinctively knew something big was going to happen. Because of that, Peng Ga Ho’s tone also dropped down to a whisper.

“Did something that’s worth some cash come out?”

“It’s not something you can even hope to buy with cash.”

“What is it?”

“Moon Edge Blade Technique (月刃刀法).”

“Eeh?!”

“Shh! Be quiet. It’d be troublesome if word got out.”

Peng Ga Ho was very surprised.

To the point where his eyes were starting to look like giant circles...

He began to stutter without even realizing it.

“C, could that technique be the same one that Ak Jung Pae, the Sword Devil, used?”

“Yeah. It seems that the Demon Church fellows are creeping out of their hiding hole because of that. It’s almost certain, actually, since they even dared to sneak into the Alliance’s territory.”

“If it really is the Moon Edge Sword Technique... I’d understand why the church is acting crazy over it.”

The Moon Edge Sword Technique.

It was the sword technique that the Sword Demon, Ak Jung Pae, used.

Ak Jung Pae was a figure that was said to have reached the godly realm in the martial world. He was truly a legendary figure.

‘Not only that...’

Peng Ga Ho thought a bit.

The Sword Devil wasn't famous just because of that.

No, the Sword Devil was famous because he alone destroyed the biggest Martial Alliance that existed back then.

The champion of the martial world in the past.

The unrivaled expert, the "Godly Monk", the Great Buddhist Teacher.

The man, who was originally from the Shaolin temple, couldn't even take 3 hits from the Sword Devil, and was chopped in half.

Because of this event, multiple martial alliances collapsed, which resulted in the 5 Great Clans and the 9 Houses merging together to form the Alliance that exists today. Because of one man, the Sword Devil, the course of history turned greatly.

For the North River Clan, who primarily relied on swords, obtaining the Sword Devil's technique was extremely desirable. Peng Ryun Hui opened his mouth.

"The main house was unable to produce an expert for a long time. It's starting to become a problem, at this point."

“That is true.”

An expert.

An expert held an immense amount of power in his hands. So much so, in fact, he/she was even capable of transforming a minor clan to a major one in just one day.

“If the main house succeeds in capturing that technique, we’ll be able to produce more experts.”

“Fufu, trust me, uncle. I’ll become that expert and bring the clan glory.”

“Mm? You?”

“Yes, me.”

Peng Ga Ho slapped his chest, and responded with absolute confidence. Seeing that, Peng Ryun Hui’s face went through various changes. Eventually, his face settled on a very obvious fake smile, and spoke.

“Yeah, I’ll look forward to that.”

Peng Ga Ho became a little annoyed, after hearing his uncle’s awkward response.

“Uncle, I’m Peng Ga Ho. Do you not believe me?”

‘I wouldn’t believe it even if I were you.’

Truthfully speaking, he had more expectations for the firstborn in the family, Peng Hyo Chun, instead of the second, Peng Ga Ho. He stopped himself from saying that out loud, and smiled. He could only smile at Peng Ga Ho. He quickly changed the subject before the conversation got any further.

“Anyways, I’m going to leave now. It was good to see you after so long.”

Peng Ga Ho was a little disappointed at his uncle, since he didn’t really believe in Peng Ga Ho. But he still saw off his uncle. And after his uncle went out of his sight, he quickly started packing provisions.

“A man can’t pass off a chance like this in his lifetime.”

If his uncle was unwilling to take him, he would go off on his own. He was a little worried about the fact that his father was going, too, but he just had to go unnoticed. There was going to be a huge battle between the Alliance and the Demon Church. He couldn’t just sit here in the countryside. Coincidentally, there was someone else who thought like Peng Ga Ho in the school.

“You came faster than expected.”

“Yes.”

“Sit here.”

Cho Ryu Hyang sat at the seat prepared for him by Jo Gi Chun, and took a look at the teacher's house. It was a home that matched Jo Gi Chun's personality perfectly. It had a very... frugal feel to it. There weren't many furniture, only some things that were absolutely necessary for living. Because of that, it gave off a lonely feeling.

“I asked you to come here for a special reason.”

The teacher paused a bit after speaking.

Proposing something a little unusual made the person who was proposing a little hesitant. And Jo Gi Chun never made a lot of proposals like this to others, to boot.

But he felt that he was going to regret it if he didn't say it now. He made a decision, and opened his mouth. The boy in front of him. If it wasn't for today's event, he probably wasn't going to even really talk to the boy at all.

But there was an event today. An event that sparked some excitement inside Jo Gi Chun's heart. Especially the face that Eu Hyun Guk made. That really made him feel satisfied.

“Would you like to be my official disciple?”

“.....Official disciple?”

“Yes. I have never seen a boy this interested in mathematics in my life. How about it?”

Cho Ryu Hyang was a bit hesitant.

Truthfully speaking, there wasn't any more math he could learn from the books. This was probably because of the information the old man in his mind gave him, but there was also the fact that he read a lot of books in the past. The information in books just didn't help him anymore. But then, he couldn't really ask the old man to teach him. That was because he couldn't really talk to the old man for lengths at a time, because his mind wasn't developed enough.

Learning under Jo Gi Chun was actually a big stroke of luck. That was why he was hesitant about all this. He felt that something was off, because there were far too many strokes of good luck up till now.

‘I'm just overthinking things, probably.’

Cho Ryu Hyang organized his thoughts, and looked at the teacher in front. And he smiled slightly.

“Thank you for looking at me in such a good way.”

After saying that, Cho Ryu hyang immediately bowed nine times at the teacher.



Jo Gi Chun was eying Cho Ryu Hyang with narrowed eyes. He never approached someone in his life in a humane way like this. Things like marriage and such, too, were usually prearranged.

He never approached someone in life, and no one ever approached him, either. But he thought he lived a pretty satisfied

life. He couldn't take care of the family, because he was so engaged in mathematics, but he himself was very content with his life.

‘Is it like this?’

Was it because of his personality to not expect anything from someone?

To think that it brought this much excitement when someone looked at him with an expression filled to the brim with expectations.

“Since teacher took me in, this student will try to learn much from teacher.”

Jo Gi Chun snapped back to his senses then.

Perhaps he took on a really amazing disciple.

He didn't really think about it before, but now that he came face-to-face with the boy, this kind of a thought popped up in his mind.

“There's not much that I can actually teach you, seeing the level you have reached. But I do believe that I can teach you the path you can take regarding mathematics.”

“Of course.”

“If you find anything troublesome in the future, come to me.”

“Yes, teacher.”

Jo Gi Chun coughed a bit, and thought calmly about something. His disciple probably knew about plenty of algorithms already. He could tell that from the boy's problem solving speed. That kind of speed only appeared when one kept solving problems that required algorithms till their hand started to bleed.

Then what should he teach the boy?

How can he help the boy advance?

Jo Gi Chun's face became a lot more serious. Perhaps he dove into this too fast, too recklessly. He could only blame himself for acting too quickly.

Jo Gi Chun was reminded of his life in the palace as he kept thinking. When he thought of that, his complexion brightened. He remembered things that he didn't think was related to math at first. But only after a long time had passed did he realize the things had a lot to do with math.

“I will give you homework from now on.”

Homework?

Cho Ryu Hyang was listening carefully. The teacher probably guessed his ability almost perfectly. Even then, the teacher gave him homework. It was probably an extremely hard homework. But that was what made everything so worth it.

“This student will try hard to complete it.”

Jo Gi Chun nodded.

“It might not seem like it has any relationship with math, but it will be of tremendous help to you, so try hard at it.”

Jo Gi Chun started to write something on paper as soon as he finished speaking. No, it would be accurate to say that he was drawing.

“This is.....”

Jo Gi Chun finished drawing, and asked Cho Ryu Hyang a question with a face filled with expectations.

“Do you know what this is?”

After looking at the drawing for a while, Cho Ryu Hyang answered.

“The numbers have a very systematic shape to it. It seems that it also moves in a pattern. North, South, East, and the West. It covers

all 4 of the major directions. And.....”

“And?”

“It seems that it is containing something inside.”

Jo Gi Chun nodded. He didn't show it on the inside, but he was actually extremely surprised inside. Indeed, his disciple's ability really was formidable. Even he was unable to figure out what this represented when he first saw it.

But his disciple was different. The boy didn't even know what that was, or what it was used for, but he was able to accurately figure out it's basic shape.

“What you are looking at is known as the Old Law (陳法).”

“The old law?”

“Indeed. All I did was to put it in mathematical forms.”

Jo Gi Chun placed the paper on the table, and opened his mouth.

“At the imperial palace, I had one more job as a mathematician other than my official task.”

Saying that, he pushed the paper on the desk towards Cho Ryu

Hyang.

“That task was to oversee and maintain all the law formations. At the time, there wasn’t anyone else who could do it other than me, which was why I had to do it. Now that I look back at it, it was probably a very good experience for me.”

Jo Gi Chun faintly smiled.

If not for this, he wouldn’t have anything else to teach his outstanding student.

Even though he was talking about it lightly, maintaining the formations in the palace truly wasn’t a simple task. That was because the formations in the palace were created by multitudes of the most skilled formations experts in the nation.

Jo Gi Chun, who was able to maintain the formation all by himself, could be called a genius on his own.

“Try to comprehend this formation. This will be the first homework I will give you.”

Cho Ryu Hyang was looking just at the paper since a while back. He knew that the homework he would be assigned would be quite hard. Only, he didn’t expect it to be this hard.

‘This is really amazing.’

He already knew a bit about formations, since he heard about it from others a lot.

But to think the formation could be laid out in numbers, he never realized that. It was a completely new realm to him. That made Cho Ryu Hyang's heart pound.

Cho Ryu Hyang was weak when it came to these kinds of things.

"I will try to finish this in the near future."

"I believe you can do it with your skills, but if you do get curious about something, you can always come see me."

"Of course."

Cho Ryu Hyang headed for his room after bidding farewell to his teacher. The formation given to him by teacher seemed exceedingly simple. But the more he looked at it, the more confused he got.

That's what got him excited. He didn't know there were still so many things he didn't know about math. After arriving at the room, he made it so that no one could enter his room, and then he opened his paper. Looking at the paper, he thought about it until he felt like his head was going to explode.

Cho Ryu Hyang never saw a formation in his life. He only knew that such a thing existed due to various talk that he heard before. Because of that, when he approached such a thing with mathematics, something new sprouted in his head.

It was a whole new world of number formations. To understand it and freely use it was probably beyond Cho Ryu Hyang.

The complete form of the formation.

Because he never saw the legitimate version of the formation in his lifetime, he wouldn't know how to deal with the real one if it was in front of him now.

‘But.....’

In front of him was a formation, that was at the same time not a formation. Intertwining multiple algorithms to form a whole picture. Cho Ryu Hyang decided to approach it in a simple manner. This was not a boundary formation, but a different type of an equation. When he thought that, his heart started to beat even faster.

To think that such a ‘thing’ known to the world as a formation could be expressed this way! Cho Ryu Hyang couldn't hide his amazement. Perhaps the words of the old man in his mind was true. If formations could be expressed with numbers, perhaps the same thing could be done with anything else. But he didn't know how that worked.

‘Take it slowly. Let’s not rush things.’

He took in a deep breath.

Short breaths narrows one’s thought. But right now, he needed to think wider. Cho Ryu Hyang fixed his glasses while breathing deeply.

Formations or whatever else there was, if it could be expressed in mathematical forms, it shouldn’t pose too much of a problem to Cho Ryu Hyang. Since he was at least confident with his math skills, there shouldn’t be too many big problems. He decided to start thinking like this to get himself a little relaxed.

But once he opened it, he saw a giant monster residing inside it for the first time. And it didn’t take him even a day to understand it.

Chapter 6. The Daughter's Scarier?!

“So he came to you, too.”

Peng Ga Ho was scared out of his mind, when someone suddenly talked to him from behind while he packed provisions. When he looked back, he saw Nangong Yubin, who had a big grin on his face.

“What?”

“You’re trying to go, too, right?”

“Where?”

“[Qilian mountains](#). (祁連山)”

Peng Ga Ho cursed in his mind.

“What? Someone come from your family, too?”

“Yeah. I asked if I could go, like you did, and got rejected.”

Nangong Yubin shrugged.

And opened his mouth.

“I figured that you were going to go, if I was going to do it, too. So I waited here for a while, so we could go together.”

If someone figured out someone else's thoughts, that person was bound to get annoyed.

Peng Ga Ho obviously felt annoyed, and mumbled a bit under his breath. Then he asked a question.

“You can go by yourself, can't you? Why try to go with me?”

“Our opponent is the Demon Church. It can be quite troublesome to go there alone safely. To be more accurate, I'm a little scared.”

“Fufu, so you need this big brother's help. You think you'll become a little more confident if you go with me?”

Nangong Yubin nodded with a smile at Peng Ga Ho's arrogant words.

“You're right. I do need your help.”

“Hoh?”

Peng Ga Ho, who wasn't expecting Nangong Yubin to admit it immediately, put on an evil smile on his face, while stroking his chin.

“I didn’t expect you to be so truthful like that. I like you. This big brother will listen to you, and travel with you.”

“Thanks.”

Even though they were both from the five great families, they weren’t really well-acquainted with each other.

But based on today’s events, a sticky bond would form that would tightly link the two together.

The two formed a plan to escape the school, and went back to their own dorms.

After separating with Nangong Yubin, Peng Ga Ho, at his own dorm room, became a little worried about something.

‘Should I tell him? Or should I just go?’

If he just disappeared all of the sudden, that guy would definitely get worried.

Peng Ga Ho thought of Cho Ryu Hyang a bit, then immediately wiped the boy off his mind by shaking his head.

If he told his friend that he was going to the Qilian Mountains to fight the Demon Church, his friend was bound to get worried.

He didn't want to get his friend get worried like that.

‘Meh, I’ll just tell him when I get back.’

When he thought of boasting about his adventures at the Qilian mountain to Cho Ryu Hyang, he got excited already.

How long could a person stay awake without sleeping? If a person didn't have a body trained with martial arts, he or she would only be able to last about 4 days.

Then how long could a little boy, who didn't even learn martial arts, be able to stay awake without sleeping? It's a little hard to know, but it can be assumed that he or she probably wouldn't even be able to manage two days.

“Young master! Young master! You have to eat!”

Grandpa Jang, who took care of Cho Ryu Hyang, couldn't sleep very well the last two days because he was so anxious.

The young master brought some piece of paper back home, and started working on some sort of math equation without even eating.

Because there was an event similar to this in the past, the man thought this would pass after a while.



But this time it was different.

The young master, who would solve even the hardest of problems in one day, was holed up in his room for over four days. He was mumbling to himself while writing down something on the paper.

When the old man lifted the paper a little bit, he discovered that it was filled with complicated numbers and symbols, layered on

top of each other.

Even looking at it was this hard, but the young master already made several of these papers already. The papers were all sprawled on the floor.

“Young master, you should eat.”

“.....mm. Just put it there, grandpa.”

Looking at the young master, who said those words with absentmindedly, the old man sighed.

“This won’t be tasty anymore if it cools off, young master. You see, I brought a chicken for you because you didn’t look too well.”

“.....I’ll eat it later. Just put it there, grandpa.”

Grandpa Jang shook his head. He sat himself down on the ground on his knees, and spoke sternly.

“I must see you eat it all with these two eyes of mine today, young master.”

Cho Ryu Hyang sighed, and fixed his glasses when he heard grandpa’s resolute words.

He was so close to getting it, and he didn't have time to waste on things like this. It felt like he could get the answer if he just played around with the numbers more, and if he got interrupted like this, it would be troublesome.

Cho Ryu Hyang opened his mouth without taking his eyes off the paper.

"I'm not going to die if I skip just one meal, grandpa."

"Do you know how many times you said that already, young master?"

"How many?"

Grandpa Jang, looking at the boy, who was speaking with absentmindedness, once again sighed. Even though the young master was smart, he usually forgot about anything that was usually deemed useless to him.

"You refused 5 meals already, young master. This old man can't even sleep because he's so worried about you."

Cho Ryu Hyang flinched, and took his eyes off the paper, while scratching his head.

".....It's already been that long?"

Speaking of, it felt like he hadn't slept for a few days.

Once he realized this fact, his head spun. He suddenly became very dizzy.

After managing to come back to his senses, he took a look at himself with the copper mirror. What he saw truly surprised him. His tired eyes became red from stress, and his hair was all bunched up from the excess oil.

After looking at himself for a while with an open mouth, he smirked a little, and took off his glasses.

“Looks like I'll have to wash myself first, actually. I'll eat after, grandpa.”

“Young master.....”

“Sorry for getting you worried. Grandpa should go rest as well.”

When grandpa heard Cho Ryu Hyang speak in a sorry tone, he quickly wiped his sore eyes with the back of his hand, and spoke.

“No. I'll go fetch water for you myself. Please, eat.”

Cho Ryu Hyang couldn't refuse grandpa, who forcefully sat the boy on the table with the food. Cho Ryu Hyang felt very sorry for the old man, as the old manservant looked as haggard as he did.

Cho Ryu Hyang's chest tightened when he looked at the steaming food laid out in front of him.

‘Did I approach it wrongly?’

He was so close to getting it, he felt as he could actually touch it. But the thing refused to show itself.

The unwound formation the teacher drew for him.

This formation, whose name Cho Ryu Hyang didn't even know the name of, was actually an incredible object. It seemed simple because teacher drew it in mere minutes, but that was a huge misconception.

There were arrays upon arrays of numbers that intertwined with each other in the paper. It felt like these arrays had neither a start or an end.

It was hard to even decipher the numbers that were put on the outside, but when one managed to look inside the formations, there were things that would shock someone to no end.

There were countless changes regarding the numbers happening all at once within, constantly.

“About eight.....”

But it's not like there were no gains during the past four days.

The movement of the formation.

Cho Ryu Hyang managed to find the order of the arrays, and also figured out the changes within the formation.

Variables (變數).

Cho Ryu Hyang found out about the existence of variables.

‘Eight variables.’

Cho Ryu Hyang put his thumb on his aching temple, and smiled.

It was hard enough solving equations that had one variable.

But there were 8 of them.

If there were this many of them, of course the calculations wouldn't move along smoothly.

So he changed his way of approaching the problem. It wasn't something that he really wanted to do. A truly simple, stupid plan. He was just popping in random numbers into the variables, and found the answers that way.

Because of that, the time he took to decrypt the formation took too long.

But the thing is, even if he took all that time to go through all that, he still couldn't find the answer.

The equation just refused to be solved. Whatever number he threw at it, it rejected all of them.

‘I should just eat first, wash myself, and sleep for now.’

He thought he should try to approach the problem again later with a clearer mind.

Cho Ryu Hyang put his hands towards the table. Hunger started to come at him like a wave, probably because he regained his senses a while back.

‘Fighting the 15 guests would be more comfortable compared to trying to solve this.’

The 15 guests.

The people who are currently ruling the martial world.

The world refers to these 15 people as the 3 Sovereigns, 5 Emperors, and the 7 Kings.

The 15 guests reached the harmonious stage in martial arts using their own ways, which was known to be the human limit.

Each of them possessed a power equivalent to a relatively big clan, and every action they made influenced the world greatly.

There were individuals within the 15 guests that were said to be on a different class compared to other humans.

The 3 Sovereigns.

Each of them represented Righteousness (正), Evil (邪), and Demonic (魔).

Many people tried to rank the three, but a conclusion had yet to be reached, even after 20 years.

After all, the 3 of them were at the very pinnacle. They couldn't really be ranked. That was why many martial artists desired to see the 3 fight each other at least once in their lifetime.

First, the Sovereign many deemed to be the strongest.

The sun that shines brightly upon the Righteous, the strongest swordsman the world has given birth to so far.

The Dao Emperor (太極劍皇), Baek Mu Ryang (伯武兩).

Appearing in the Martial world at the age 30, he was the first to show the power of the ones that harmonized their inner power. He did not find any who could fight him for 40 years, and right now, he was presiding over the group known to fight for the righteousness in the world, the [Righteous Path Alliance](#) (正道盟).

(TL: The Righteous Path Alliance is actually the “Alliance” that appeared last chapter. I called it the alliance last time since I didn’t know the Alliance’s real name, if I remember correctly.)

The man’s nickname was even the “Unrivaled Swordsman”. It wasn’t an exaggeration to call him the strongest under the heavens. Also, Baek Mu Ryang was the only Sovereign that actually boasted his powers out of the three.

Secondly, the most mysterious, and strange Sovereign.

Known to be the strongest in the evil side. The Dark Moon Guild’s (黑月會) former manager, also known as the grim reaper from hell.

Black Moon King (黑月夜皇), Neng Mu Gi (冷武器).

The guild he was in, the Dark Moon Guild, used to be one of the minor guilds in the evil side. But that was all before the extraordinary reaper known as Neng Mu Gi came into the scene.

After Neng Mu Gi joined the Dark Moon Guild, the guild changed.

The guild started to work as mercenaries.

All of the sudden, the Dark Moon Guild became one of the biggest guilds in the side, and their name represented “Evil”.

The one that the martial world fears the most, the emperor of the night.

There was no one who was left alive after they were visited personally by the Black Moon King.

Apparently, the Black Moon King only carried out about 20 missions. Compared to the weight of his name, the number of times he killed was exceedingly small.

But if one looked at the people he killed, they would be shocked out of their mind.

Each one of the people that he killed, was either leaders of an extremely large clan, or were superhumans that existed before the 15 guests arrived, the 10 Absolutes (絶代十客). Out of the 10, 6 were killed by this one man.

When one’s inner power reaches the harmonious state, their senses get improved tremendously. Because of this, they cannot be killed by mere assassins.

This means in order to kill them, a person had to fight them head-on. In this situation, an assassin would be extremely disadvantageous.

But even with this disadvantage, the Night Emperor (夜黃) Neng Mu Gi managed to kill 6 experts who reached the harmonious state. That meant the Night Emperor was at least twice as strong as the experts.

The martial world became extremely surprised by these events.

It was deemed impossible to assassinate experts, after all. But the Night Emperor managed to do it.

Out of the 10 Absolutes, only 4 remained.

It was a little strange phenomenon, but when the 6 experts got killed, many more experts managed to reach the harmonious state. What happened was, the sons and daughters of the leaders that got killed by Neng Mu Gi trained themselves to the utter limit, so that they could beat Neng Mu Gi.

They managed to form what is known as the 15 guests today. But even after attaining that title, they were unable to do a thing to Neng Mu Gi. Why? When experts grow in power, they begin to be able to roughly estimate the power of their opponents.

That's how they knew it. The Neng Mu Gi they considered

beatable in the past, was actually something that was just impossible to reach.

Because of that, quite a lot of martial artists claimed that Neng Mu Gi might be the strongest out of the 3 Sovereigns. Even though the Sword Emperor (劍), Baek Mu Ryang also managed to kill an expert at the harmonious stage, but compared to the 6 that the Night Emperor managed to destroy, it wasn't really worth looking at.

And the last of the Sovereigns, the descendent of the Heavenly Demon.

[Demon Emperor](#) (暗黒魔皇), Gongson Chun Gi (公孫天器).

(TL: It's not just dark emperor, it was actually Absolute Darkness Demon Emperor, but that's just too Chuuninbyou to even be taken seriously. Plus, he was called Dark Emperor at [chapter 2](#).)

When his name was discussed, even the loudest of the experts went quiet.

The very definition of fear in the martial world, the Heavenly Demon Church.

From the past, it was said that whenever the Heavenly Demon Church made their move, the places they swept through became a sea of blood.

Gongson Chun Gi was the leader of that immense power, and was

known to be the strongest in the history of the church.



But his position in the martial world was a bit strange.

As one of the sovereigns, the Demon Emperor, Gongson Chun Gi never displayed his powers in the martial world.

Everyone was curious about how strong he really was.

But that was it.

No one doubted the man's powers. The force he lead was too big and powerful to even arouse a spark of doubt in their hearts.

“So... you're saying you do recognize Gongson Chun Gi as one of the three Sovereigns, but he's the weakest of the three?”

“Probably, yeah.”

The girl with a wise glint in her eyes.

She wrinkled her eyebrows as she looked at her father.

“What? So it's not clear, then?”

The girl's father.

Currently one of the major experts in the Evil side, and the current manager of the Dark Moon Guild, Neng Pa Chun. He was

known to be one of the best assassins in the world, with the nickname “One hit kill (冷破天)”.

He had a troubled look on his face as he spoke to his daughter.

“The thing is, no one ever saw any of the Sovereigns actually go all out. The Dao Emperor, who is showing a bit of his power to the public, lets us barely be able to measure the rankings, but that’s not that accurate, since it was made so long ago…….”

The daughter’s face turned uglier the longer her father’s speech continued. Eventually, she threw down her brush on the ground, and exploded.

“Damn it, I’m not going to do this anymore! If it’s like this, why are you even trying to make the ‘[Martial World Sequence Records](#)’?! The name’s really fancy and stuff, but nothing in it’s accurate.”

(TL: The Rivers and Lakes Sequence Records was actually the Martial World Sequence Records. The Rivers and Lakes part.. that was a mistranslation,)

“That is…….”

Since martial power couldn’t be measured by numbers, one could only measure it by comparing it to something else.

To do that, one must establish a clear reference to start on, but since even the reference point was messed up, everything else was

bound to be inaccurate.

“I mean, if the 3 Sovereigns are like this, how are we going to rank the people below them? How are the 15 guests ranked, even?”

At the girl's sudden question, Neng Pa Chun answered hesitantly.

“.....Some of them are actually ranked accurately.”

The girl responded sternly at her father.

“Just give up, dad. This whole thing has no hope.”

“.....If I give up like this, daddy's going to be punished by the elders.....”

“Then why'd you say you'd do it in the first place? Now that grandpa retired, we have to tread a bit more carefully. Why'd you choose such a risky job?”

Neng Pa Chun flinched when the girl said that.

“Daddy's the manager of the guild. Don't make me lose face like this.....”

“Does saving face get us any money? Like I said before, just stop being a manager already.”

“That’s kind of..... you know? Father’s the one who gave this job to me. If I give up on it now, I’m going to be in a tight situation.”

“Arrgh!”

The girl screamed loudly, and kept scolding her father.

A little later, she started smacking her chest out of frustration.

“Don’t you know that old ginger is spicier than the rest? You were tricked by the elders!”

Neng Pa Chun finally put on a sad face, and nodded.

“Those old guys are playing me for a fool. Ignoring me like that.... I really couldn’t do anything about it this time. I had to show those old guys something, you know?”

“.....”

The girl shut her mouth.

The man was her father, and yet he’s way of work was too pathetic.

‘Something needs to change.’

The girl started thinking about something carefully.

She no longer felt that her father could be trusted with his job.

Chapter 7. Cho Ryu Hyang's Formation Creation

If you thought about it, the changes the elders went through were clearly big. As the Dark Moon guild's size increased, enormous profits began to be made.

Even though the guild couldn't show themselves off in public to gain money, they still earned money by engaging in various jobs like becoming escorts. Thanks to the various methods they used to scrape in money, they were raking in quite a lot of cash. But while Neng Mu Gi, the Night Emperor, presided over the guild, no one dared to use the money for anything foolish. For his words were the law, and every one of his actions were a subject of awe.

But Neng Mu Gi's son, Neng Pa Chun, didn't have any of the power that Neng Mu Gi had.

When Neng Pa Chun became the president, the Dark Moon Guild, which seemed so formidable at first, began to crumble a little.

“How can those old guys change just like that? They couldn't even look at me in the eye when father was here. The world's a scary place.”

The girl sighed at her father's statement.

“The person's different, dad.”

Neng Pa Chun put on a hurt face when he heard her truthful words.

“.....I know father’s amazing, but hearing my daughter say it like that, I feel hurt.”

“I’m just telling the truth.”

Neng Pa Chun’s father, and the girl’s grandfather.

There was a difference of heaven and earth between Neng Mu Gi, one of the Sovereigns, and Neng Pa Chun.

Personality or strength, Neng Mu Gi outstripped his son by far in both.

They were different beings from the ground up.

“I suppose the elders just wanted to start exerting power now that Grandpa retired. Just give up. You should retire from your position, and live comfortably.”

The girl.

She was the granddaughter of Neng Mu Gi, Neng Ha Young (冷夏榮).

The girl, who was known for her intelligence from a young age, so much so that she was even rumored to become an Unmatched Woman(才女) Under The Heavens, became confused. Even though her father wouldn't be able to know, her grandfather most definitely predicted that this sort of a thing would happen. But seeing that he did not move an inch even though this happened, the girl figured that her grandfather had some sort of plan in his mind.

‘I can't figure that out.’

Her father clearly was too lacking to become the manager of the greatest guild in the underground world, the Dark Moon Guild. In fact, he was really lacking. He became pretty strong in the martial world thanks to his blood, so some of the elements that he lacked could easily be ignored.

But his personality or his ability as a leader definitely couldn't be ignored like that, especially when he was the manager of the Dark Moon Guild.

He had neither the right personality or the leadership to become a capable head.

Because of that, Neng Ha Young was looking at the situation skeptically.

She thought her father held a position he did not deserve.

Neng Ha Young, after thinking a while, sighed. When it came to measuring up a person, there was none that could match up to Neng Mu Gi. But then, why did her grandfather put up his son as the manager?

‘Does he have something in mind?’

Neng Ha Young began to think carefully.



Grandpa disappeared after announcing his retirement.

At first, everyone accepted Neng Pa Chun even after Neng Mu Gi retired. This wasn't because of Neng Pa Chun's actual ability. This was because Neng Mu Gi's giant shadow still lingered behind Neng Pa Chun.

As the Dark Moon Guild was starting to grow, many of the stronger experts in the underground world, were invited to become the elders of the guild. Even they didn't have any problems in letting Neng Pa Chun become the leader of the guild. While he was being recognized as such, Neng Pa Chun should've displayed his abilities to secure his power, but his talents were far too lacking for that. As time passed, and Neng Pa Chun's insufficient abilities began to be shown to the public, the Elders began to fully let out their greed.

The Dark Moon Guild was an extremely large organization. They were strong enough to be counted as one of the 3 Great Martial Groups. If they were this large, couldn't they indulge themselves a bit?

Even though they feared Neng Mu Gi, seeing that he hasn't even taken action even till now, they figured that the man didn't have any more attachments to this place. Even though they confirmed it, the elders were still being careful. Neng Mu Gi scared them that much.

But it wasn't like Neng Mu Gi actually didn't have any attachments, either.

He too, was annoying Neng Pa Chun by starting to be a little greedy.

‘But this is probably it.’

Neng Ha Young figured this was probably the final point. The elder’s patience probably hit the limit. If her father wasn’t even able to accomplish something like this, Neng Pa Chun wouldn’t be just scolded. Neng Ha Young feared that.

“I think I’ll have to go see grandpa.”

“Father?”

Neng Pa Chun widened his eyes.

No one knew where Neng Mu Gi was, since the man hid himself from public eye after retiring.

That was why even Neng Pa Chun couldn’t meet his father, even though he wanted to see him greatly.

“Dear, do you know where father is?”

“Nope.”

“Then how are you going to meet him?”

“I think I know where he might be.”

Neng Ha Young stood up from where she was.

Probably, no one under the heavens would be able to find her grandfather, who was determined to hide himself.

All except her, that was.

“Remember what grandpa said to you before he left?”

“Did he say anything about going anywhere?”

He couldn't remember his father telling him anything about going anywhere.

Neng Pa Chun tried thinking again more carefully. Still nothing.

“Did father tell you anything in secret or something?”

“No, he didn't say anything about going anywhere.”

Neng Ha Young grinned from ear to ear.

She had a very confident look in her face.

“But I can find him.”

Neng Mu Gi told his son this when he retired.

[I could not reflect upon myself till now because of all the other petty problems that came my way. I feel that I did enough for the organization already, so now I will reorganize my thoughts by resetting my mindset. So don't try to bother me if you can. But it's not like you can find me, anyways.]

When Neng Mu Gi said that, he gave Neng Ha Young a mysterious look.

And Neng Ha Young was able to figure out the hidden meaning within Neng Mu Gi's words.

“I'll be at the Qilian mountains (祁連山) for a while.”

Qilian mountains.

This was where Neng Mu Gi first met his master, the Qilian Sword Demon, and learnt martial arts. That was why Neng Ha Young was certain.

Her grandfather was there.

After resting for the whole day, Cho Ryu Hyang was at the back yard with a wooden stick. He was contemplating upon something with a very serious look on his face. If he wanted to solve the problem given to him, he should change his way of approaching the problem.

So he started thinking.

The answer he got after thinking a while, actually had quite a lot of restrictions. That's why he was hesitating so much over testing it. Then, his father's favorite phrase passed by in his mind.

'A person doesn't even have the right to regret over something he hasn't even done.'

It was a very meaningful sentence.

Cho Ryu Hyang set his mind in place after thinking about it.

With a determined face, he started to draw a line on the ground.

A concentrated face.

Right now, everything else disappeared in the world, and Cho Ryu Hyang could only see the line that he was currently drawing on the ground.

‘This is the most important part, now.’

What he was trying to do now was something extremely hard.

But that’s what brought him enjoyment in the first place.

Right now, Cho Ryu Hyang was carefully controlling his strength with utmost concentration, to draw a single line on the ground. Cho Ryu Hyang paid attention to even the thickness of the line as much as possible. The line he drew was as big as a small child’s height.

“Phew…….”

But the real problem started here.

Cho Ryu Hyang breathed in deeply, and went to draw another line, parallel to the line he drew just a moment before. He checked multiple times to see that the two lines were perfectly parallel. Starting with that, he drew a total of 8 lines.

The work took about 1 hour till now.

But Cho Ryu Hyang, without stopping, kept drawing more lines.

When Cho Ryu Hyang finished drawing the last line, his whole body was drenched in sweat. He was that focused in his work. He fixed his glasses in place, wiped his forehead, and stared at his

work.

“Fufu.....”

The work he created was a surprisingly perfect octagon. This was the formation that his teacher gave him. He drew this on the ground himself.

‘There’s still one more thing.’

This wasn’t the end.

There was one last thing to be done.

The circle that encapsules the octagon.

Once he completes that, his formation would be complete.

Cho Ryu Hyang swallowed his spit. Then he slowly drew a circle around the octagon. The stick in his hand followed his hand movements, and drew the circle. The moment before he finished, Cho Ryu Hyang paused.

‘Could it really.....?’

According to the equation, once the circle is completed, the formation is activated. And once activated, even the strongest man

in the world would be unable to destroy it. It was that strong.

But he couldn't believe it.

He couldn't believe that an abnormal thing could happen just because of a few lines.

Suspicion and belief.

Because of the two feelings conflicting with each other, Cho Ryu Hyang was at a confused state.

As Cho Ryu Hyang never suffered from an emotional conflict like this, as he was a very logical thinker, this conflict confused him very much.

‘Will it really work?’

After waiting for a while, Cho Ryu Hyang finally stepped outside the formation. He didn't feel the need to bet on something that was uncertain to begin with. He stepped out of the circle, and completed the circle.

‘It's done now, huh.’

Cho Ryu Hyang looked at the formation with a stiff face. The formation that his teacher gave to him in mathematical form was translated to the ground perfectly.

According to the equation, there would be an amazing amount of pressure inside the formation right now. Since Cho Ryu Hyang minimized the formation by 3 times, the pressure would be decreased, but it was still at the level a normal human would barely be able to endure.

‘Is that really the case?’

Cho Ryu Hyang’s posture relaxed a bit.

That was because there was no change in the formation even after some time.

In his mind, suspicion was growing.

Was there really something going on within the formation?

According to the equation, once someone goes in, not only will he be bombarded with pressure, but he will also see hallucinations of a great storm. The hallucination will continue to strengthen, until it actually becomes real, and it kills the person inside.

‘It’s hard to believe.’

Cho Ryu Hyang was full of disbelief now.

But the thing was, he didn’t have the courage to go inside.

“Hn.....”

Cho Ryu Hyang circled the formation multiple times, like some dog that had to do its business urgently.

The reason he drew the formation was simple. Since he couldn't solve it in mathematical form, he decided to try the formation itself, and see if he could get any intuition from that.

But once he made the formation, he hit another problem. Unless he went inside, he wouldn't find any solution. After moaning some more like a sick patient, Cho Ryu Hyang shook his head.

It seemed that he would really have to enter the formation. But he couldn't just enter it. He needed something that could ensure his safety. After thinking for a long time, Cho Ryu Hyang went back to his living quarters.

A little while later, he brought back something with him. It was a thick rope about 9 meters long. He wrapped it around a tree in the back yard, and tied the other end to himself. This got him a little braver.

‘Just for safety measures.’

He didn't even know if the formation would even activate, but he prepared a rope just in case. If the formation did indeed work, he would pull himself out with the rope. After going through all the

preparation, Cho Ryu Hyang breathed deeply a few times.

And he put one of his feet inside the formation.

Tap–

Once his foot entered the formation, Cho Ryu Hyang flinched. A little bit later, he had a confused look on his face. He was very anxious, but once he entered, nothing happened. He took one more look at the formation.

‘.....Does the whole body have to go in?’

Cho Ryu Hyang quickly reviewed the equation for the formation in his head, but there was nothing that mentioned such a thing.

He was filled with relief and disappointment at the same time. It seems he was actually hoping for a supernatural thing to happen. Cho Ryu Hyang lifted his other foot with a complicated face.

‘Would it really activate if I put in my whole body?’

He didn’t think it would work.

He was really skeptical right now.

When he thought about himself putting an hour of hard work

into something that didn't even work, he got discouraged. Even so, he started to prepare himself one more time.

‘Well, there is a miniscule chance of it working.....’

A person had to be thorough in everything.

If the formation actually worked, the rope he had would be his only lifeline.

“.....!”

Again, the formation did not work.

The rope wrapped around his waist.

He was starting to look awkward, holding the rope with his hands tightly.

Cho Ryu Hyang looked around quickly. Thankfully, there was no one around. If someone actually saw him like this, he would die of shame.

‘What a tragedy.’

Cho Ryu Hyang just stood in the formation for a while. Then, he started to erase the lines with his feet. He didn't want anyone to

see even the traces of what happened here.

‘Was teacher actually just joking?’

When he thought about his teacher’s serious, noble face, the chances of him joking didn’t seem likely. But the teacher’s equation for the formation clearly said that something amazing would happen if one gets inside the formation.

But once he actually tried out the formation, nothing happened.

If this was simply a joke, this was too sad.

‘You made a bad joke, teacher.’

Cho Ryu Hyang kept erasing the lines while thinking about his teacher reproachfully. All of a sudden, he thought of something, and trembled. He stopped erasing the lines. His eyes were shining in delight.

‘The variables!’

When he thought about it, he didn’t put in the 8 variables he found in the formation. No, it’s better to say that he wasn’t able to put it in. Variables were called variables because their values could change at any given moment, after all.

How was he supposed to put that into the formation?

When he thought that, he started to think more and more.

He was pondering upon the subject.

Cho Ryu Hyang kept thinking, all the while holding onto the rope in his hands. When he gained a small insight, he once again trembled.

‘Could it be the numbers for the variables weren’t the numbers that change inside the formation, but it was just numbers from the outside?’

If he couldn’t find any answer by calculating all the possibilities he could think of, it was all right to say that there was no answer at all. Cho Ryu Hyang quickly took off the rope tied around his waist, and started running around the backyard.

He was trying to find something.

A little later, Cho Ryu Hyang came back with 8 stones, all shaped differently from each other. Cho Ryu Hyang had a big grin on his face. It was as if he found giant lumps of gold.

“Yes, these are the variables. Things that are fundamentally the same, but can change at any time!”

The stones all look different.

No, in the first place, stones that look exactly like each other don't exist in the world. Even if someone tried to make something like it, it wouldn't work. That was because even though stones were all composed of the same thing, the size, shape, and the weight were all different.

‘Nature is what changes the shapes everything to differ from one another, even though they are made of the same thing in the end.’

And Cho Ryu Hyang had the ability, the “Faultless View of The World”. Using that, he could see the values of each stone at hand.

After confirming the values of each stone, Cho Ryu Hyang believed that they would make fantastic variables that would complete the formation without fail.

Cho Ryu Hyang picked up his wooden branch, and started drawing again.

This time, he drew less carefully, a little rougher than before. The completed formation looked a little roughed up. Cho Ryu Hyang stood inside the formation, and started to put stones at each vertex of the octagon.

Did he gain yet another insight?

Cho Ryu Hyang's hands were trembling nonstop as he placed the stones.

‘The formation, too, didn’t need to be drawn so carefully from the start. As long as the energy were able to flow through the lines without fail, it should work.’

If there were any parts that were poorly drawn, the energies that flow through the lines should be able to fix it. If it was too badly drawn, the energies would seep out of the lines. When Cho Ryu Hyang gained an insight, countless others followed. Because of the countless insights that were coming at him nonstop, Cho Ryu Hyang forgot about one important fact.

When he put the last stone on the final vertex.

“Eh?”

Cho Ryu Hyang’s entire body disappeared like smoke.

Chapter 8. A Nail In The Pocket Can Only Stick Out

The Five Great Clans.

They are the 5 strongest, most influential clans under the heavens.

The five clans started off with the clan known to be the strongest clan under the heavens, the Nangong Clan. It was followed by the kings of the Sichuan region, the Sichuan Dang Clan. Then, the rulers of the Hebei, the Hebei Peng Clan. That was followed by the clan at the Liaoning, which was at the corner of the martial world. They were known as the Murong Clan.

And.....

There was the clan that was regarded as the weakest of the five; Famous for their strategic minds instead of their martial skills, was the Zhuge clan, located in Honam.

“I’m sure most of you already know, but starting today, we’ll stop working externally for a while due to having to repair the main house’s formation.”

The scholarly, middle-aged man.

He was the current head of the Zhuge clan, and was known as the

“Scholarly sword”, Zhuge Sang Lin. Zhuge Sang Lin was leading the meeting with all the active Zhuge clan members in the room.

The table laid in front of him.

About 10 people were sitting on each side of the table. On the table, there was a giant golden box, which was about big enough to fit a grown man inside.

Zhuce Sang Lin pushed the box into the center and opened his mouth.

“All foreign matters will be dealt by Zhuge Gi (諸葛器), and all internal matters that needs to be hidden from privy eyes will be dealt with by Zhuge Mu Hui (諸葛武輝).”

All the members nodded in agreement. It seemed they expected this to some extent.

Zhuge Sang Lin looked at two young men seated across from each other on the far side of the table, and spoke up.

“As you know, this event will determine the fate of our clan for the next 10 years. Because of that, everyone here will monitor your every move. Don’t make a single mistake in your work.”

“Yes.”

“I will keep that in mind.”

After Zhuge Gi and Zhuge Mu Hui answered, Zhuge Sang Lin looked at everyone room, and spoke.

“I trust the children’s ability, but since we don’t know what might happen, could a elder help them out?”

“This one will take care of Gi with the foreign matters, head.”

[Zhuge Yong Mok](#) (諸葛龍目).

(TL: Zhuge Dragon Eyes. Neat.)

Originally, he wasn’t from the Zhuge family. But a long time ago, he married into the family and became one of the Zhuge family. In the martial world, he was known as the “Dual Wielding Flying Sword” (雙手飛劍). Looking at him with reassured eyes, Zhuge Sang Lin nodded.

“I’m confident that elder Yong Mok will be able to take care of Gi easily. Now then, is there anyone willing to help out Mu Hui?”

“I will help him, head.”

Zhug Yu Sung (諸葛流星).

He was known as the strongest in the Zhuge family, and was the uncle of the current head of the Zhuge clan. Hearing his words,

Zhuge Sang Lin made a troubled face.

“Would uncle be alright with taking care of this sort of task?”

“This is the biggest event in the Zhuge clan right now. Who would I be to back out from this?”

“But.....”

Zhuge Sang Lin made a complicated face.

It was the same for all the other Five Clans. They clung to people of the same blood more so than others. Because of that, the rankings within the clan was rather murky at the moment. There were even times when the elders were able to overrule the head's decision for the family.

For example, Zhuge Yu Sung, who was known as an extremely strong expert, even stronger than Zhuge Sang Lin, recieved a lot of support from the stronger experts in the family. That was what confused Zhuge Sang Lin. Unlike other clans, the Zhuge clan forbid anyone weak from becoming the clan head. That meant if the firstborn didn't have enough power, the 2nd child was always welcome to become the head.

‘He hasn't even made a move once till now.....’

Zhuge Yu Sung's move signaled an immense movement within the clan. That was because the man never took sides with anyone

till now. Until today, the man stayed neutral.

“This one has high regards for the second child. That’s why I just want to help him out.”

“.....!”

Zhuge Sang Lin couldn’t hide his surprised face at Zhuge Yu Sung’s words. Zhuge Yu Sung was known to be very sharp-witted in the clan. Then doesn’t saying those kind of words clearly mean that he was supporting the second child to become the clan head?

‘Is there some that something about the second child that I failed to see?’

Zhuge Sang Lin scanned through his memories, and found nothing. The second was a quiet child that simply liked to read. Except for the fact that the child was able to keep a cool head, there wasn’t any other redeeming qualities. Because of that, the firstborn, who was active, headstrong, and was skilled in martial arts, seemed more likely to become the head of the family.

But thanks to what happened here, that didn’t seem too likely anymore.

Zhuge Yu Sung’s statement had this much of an impact upon the family.

Because of the sudden statement from the elder, there was now a

higher chance of a family feud happening in the family about the next head.

‘This is troublesome.’

When he was thinking about asking the man about what exactly he was thinking, he noticed that everyone else in the room were also confused. They were glancing at Zhuge Yu Sung constantly.

“Is there anything else we must talk about?”

As if he realized that he was being watched by others, Zhuge Yu Sung asked the head this with a scolding tone. The head, brought back to his senses, panicked a little and spoke up.

“The next matter we’ll talk about is.....”

The conference continued, but no one was really listening anymore.

Their mind was thinking about something else at this point.

“Please tell me uncle’s motives for doing this.”

“My motives? Whatever do you mean?”

“Do you seriously not know what I’m talking about?”

“Are you asking me this because you actually don’t know? I didn’t really see the head as a stupid individual.”

Zhuge Sang Lin’s face wrinkled in displeasure.

He was able to feel Zhuge Yu Sung’s resolution in his voice.

“That child isn’t fit to become the next head.”

“Is that what the head thinks?”

“The others are probably thinking the same, too.”

“Don’t worry about that. Their minds probably changed today. I’m sure of it.”

“Uncle!”

He didn’t want to cause a pointless feud.

How much blood has been spilt over brothers fighting to become the head till now? This kind of an event happened far too many times in the history of the Zhuge clan. Did Zhuge Sang Lin’s thoughts appear unto his face? The elder spoke these words to him in a calm voice.

“I know what the head is worried about. But this is for the sake of the whole clan.”

“Will the clan only prosper if brothers have to fight each other for the throne?”

His words were starting to get thorny.

Zhuge Sang Lin furiously glared at his uncle.

The most respected adult in the clan, the man who was nearing the harmonious stage. Zhuge Sang Lin couldn't understand why a man like this caused such an event.

“I too, have endured for a long time. I wanted to avoid this if possible. But it's not possible. If I delayed it any longer, there would've been even more bloodshed within the clan. If I do it here and now, we will be able to have a relatively good ending.”

“Why did you make such a decision?”

“How much do you know about that child?”

“I know that the boy has a smart head on his shoulders. But.....”

“Is that all?”

Was there something more to it?

Zhuge Sang Lin wrinkled his head and fell into deep thought.

It seemed that Zhuge Yu Sung knew something else about the child that he didn't know.

What was it?

Was it something big enough to settle the position of the head?

“The head does not know Zhuge Mu Hui. That's probably why you do not like my decision. But you'll also come to realize soon that I was right.”

“.....”

Zhuge Sang Lin couldn't say anything.

Even though he didn't reach the Harmonious stage, Zhuge Yu Sung was extremely good at making decisions, at least when it came to anything that he knew about. If he saw something in that boy, Mu Hui probably had an unimaginable talent within him.

“.....I will take time to monitor the second child.”

Even though he didn't like the situation, this was probably the best way to handle the situation for now.

As if he knew what Zhuge Sang Lin was thinking, Zhuge Yu Sung's voice became a lot more gentle.

“There is a saying known as Nan Zhong Zhi Zhui (囊中之錐: A nail in the pocket can only stick out). The boy's talent would be revealed anyways in this event. I'll make it happen. So throw away your first impression of him, and look at his real self.”

Zhuce Sang Lin closed his mouth. He was a little pressured by the elder's confident words. He felt that he did indeed need to watch Mu Hui a bit more.

Zhuge Mu Hui felt hectic today.

Starting from Zhuge Gi, his elder brother, all the elders of the clan came to visit him. The source of all this came late at night.

But since he already expected this visit to happen, he couldn't give the biggest figure in the clan poor treatment.

“This is.... Longjin tea.”

“Yes.”

“Were you unable to sleep? No, you were waiting for me, weren’t you.”

“Yes.”

Mu Hui made a bitter smile while looking at the elder. He came without warning, and he didn’t even say why. But the elder wasn’t the only won who had to explain some things. He had to, too.

“I don’t why why you’re doing this.”

Zhuge Yu Sung.

He smirked, and asked him:

“Do you really not know?”

“Yes. I believe my brother is more suited to become the clan head.”

“That’s what you think, yes?”

“Yes.”

“Everyone’s going to think differently later. You will become the head. I will make it that way.”

Mu Hui made a troubled face, and scratched the back of his head.

He really wasn't interested in becoming the clan head.

That was because he thought his personality didn't match that sort of a thing at all.

And couldn't you see the talent overflowing from his older brother already?

He just wanted to pass on the troublesome job to his older brother, and read some books in the library in a relaxed fashion.

"Don't try to dodge the job you've been given as the member of the clan. I know what you're like. You're slothful, and lazy."

"....."

Zhuge Yu Sung opened his mouth again when Mu Hui made a difficult expression.

"But that's not your real self. I don't want to become a head. I don't want to fight big brother. I don't want to cause a feud. That's probably what you're thinking inside your head."

Zhuge Mu Hui's relaxed face trembled a bit. Noticing the change, Zhuge Yu Sung drank a bit more of his tea, and spoke.

“When it came to martial arts, we were always being pushed around by other clans. They rated us highly for our intelligence, but in martial arts, we were always one step behind.”

“.....”

“As you know, this is a very shameful thing to happen. In this world, strength is key, but our main house is always known as the weakest out of all the clans. I never did like the main house because of that.”

Zhuge Mu Hui was a little confused. What did this have anything to do with the matter at hand? He couldn't figure out the motive of the elder.

“Because of that, I believed that only strength could give power to the clan, so I started training in martial arts since a young age. That's why I gave up on being the head. Thanks to that, I did gain some rewards. That that's it. The realm of harmonization is still far, and I'll probably never reach it in my lifetime.”

“.....You're underestimating yourself too much.”

The elder shook his head.

“No, I will not reach the realm of harmonization. I studied the martial techniques of the main house all my life, but didn't reach it. No, I can't do it. You know what that represents?”

“.....”

“The martial arts the main house possesses is weak. Compared to the martial arts of the other clans, our clan’s martial art itself got weak. It makes sense, seeing that none of our ancestors entered the harmonious stage.”

It did make sense.

While all the other clans took their traditional martial arts styles and expanded upon it for centuries, the Zhuge clan basically compiled all the good points of those martial arts into one.

Because of that, while they call their martial arts the “most perfect” style, it is actually just a random compilation of techniques. Zhuge Mu Hui carefully opened his mouth.

“Isn’t it just based on talent?”

“Indeed. It could be because of my talent that I am unable to reach the harmonious state. I am admitting that.”

Looking at the elder, who coolly admitted that fact, Zhuge Mu Hui smiled. Then, Zhuge Yu Sung erased his smile instantly, and spoke up.

“Do not fold your own wings. I understand you not wanting to

cause a family feud. But if you do that, your talent will just be wasted.”

“.....”

Zhuge Mu Hui put on a face of innocence, as if he didn't know what the other party was talking about.

But he couldn't prevent his eyes from trembling.

“Do not hide your claws. No, it's useless even if you hide it.”

“I.....”

“With our current arts, we cannot even think about becoming the best under the heavens. You know that already, yes?”

“.....”

Zhuge Mu Hui thought that it wasn't necessarily impossible, but he didn't dare say it out loud. That was because he agreed with the elder somewhat. The Zhuge clan's martial art was flawed. There was something unusual about their martial art, something so small that only an expert on the harmonious stage would be able to detect it.

“I know your talents are about as same as mine. But that is it. You probably know that now.”

Zhuge Mu Hui had a really troubled look. Since the elder knew this much already, he couldn't hide it anyways.

“When did you..... learn about it? I never realized grandfather was such a sly person.”

Zhuge Yu Sung grinned.

“I wasn't sure about it even till now, actually. I don't know how you did it, but you hid your talent well. But while you can hide your talent, you can't hide your body, that reached peak condition already. The others probably couldn't see it, but I could. That's why I was paying attention to you.”

Zhuge Mu Hui learnt that he had been tricked, but he couldn't do anything. The elder was sly, yet wise. Under his gaze, Mu Hui would've been discovered sooner or later.

While he had a regretful expression on his face, Zhuge Yu Sung grabbed onto Zhuge Mu Hui's hands. Mu Hui could somehow feel the immense amount of passion from those hands, and therefore made an unpleasant face.

“There is no depth in the main house's martial art. Because of that, the limits we can reach with this power is not high, either.”

“.....It would certainly be hard.”

But Zhuge Mu Hui thought if one did put his whole life into it, it might be possible. That was why he was thinking about dedicating his life to martial arts after giving up on the head position.

And then after somehow reaching the harmonious stage, he would fix the mistakes that appear in their martial arts. As if Zhuge Yu Sung read his thoughts, the elder shook his head violently.

“Wouldn’t it be nice to be able to show strength without using martial arts? The clan never used martial arts to become famous, anyways.”

Zhuge Mu Hui put on a complicated face.

Use something other than martial arts to show power in the martial world?

Did that something even exist?

Zhuge Yu Sung pulled out something from his pocket.

“Mystical Door Formation. Our house’s roots come from here, and therefor we can use this to grow stronger. And when it comes to formations, no one has a better advantage than us.”

Zhuge Mu Hui looked at the old book in Zhuge Yu Sung’s hands.

“What is that?”

“The greatest of our ancestors created this book. I found it not long ago.”

『Moon Edge Flower Algorithm Magic (月刃森羅算法術解) (下)』 (TL: Volume 2)

Looking at the title of the book, Zhuge Mu Hui’s eyelashes were faintly trembling.

“.....Could it be?”

“Yes. You probably heard of this a few times in the clan. This is the greatest formations book given to us by the chancellor of the Shu Han, Zhuge Kongming. With this, our powers will increase indefinitely.”

It was something known to have disappeared a long time ago.

Since Zhuge Mu Hui didn’t know it would end up in his hands like this, his face started to twist into a complex expression.



Chapter 9. Inviting Jo Gi Chun

After his lecture ended, Jo Gi Chun called out Peng Ga Ho to talk to him.

Peng Ga Ho wasn't very fond of talking to the teacher, thanks to a certain event, but once he learned that the teacher wanted to talk about Cho Ryu Hyang, his expression quickly changed.

“You say he is resting because he's unwell?”

“Yes, didn't he send a message?”

He did indeed receive a message.

But that was over 5 days ago.

Was Cho Ryu Hyang too sick to come out to the lecture for 5 days?

“Did you go visit him?”

“Yea. I peeked inside, and his face was no joke. He was really pale and worn. Didn't look like he slept for a few days.”

Peng Ga Ho barely stopped himself from saying “He looked a little insane”.

“Hmmm.....”

Jo Gi Chun thought a little when Peng Ga Ho answered him.

But he didn't realize that Cho Ryu Hyang was unable to sleep because of the homework he had given him.

‘I should go visit him.’

This was his first disciple.

He got worried when this disciple got sick. Jo Gi Chun was surprised at himself, for actually getting worried over someone else. He never got really worried for someone, after all.

“Why are you trying to find that boy?”

When Peng Ga Ho cautiously asked him this question, Jo Gi Chun answered with a casual voice.

“I was talking about mathematics with the boy.”

“Ah.... ok.”

Math? Again? Peng Ga Ho complained in his mind about how incomprehensible these fellows were. But on the outside, he had

an extremely polite expression on his face.

“May I leave now?”

“Yes. You’ve done well.”

When Peng Ga Ho quietly exited, Jo Gi Chun revealed an anxious face. He wanted to visit the child immediately, but he couldn’t just go as he pleased, as it would attract unwanted attention. No one knew that he took on a disciple, after all.

And he didn’t have any intention of revealing this to the public, either. Looking at Peng Ga Ho’s actions from earlier, it seemed that Cho Ryu Hyang, too, was kept this fact a secret.

‘This is for the best.’

Jo Gi Chun had a glimpse of a smile on his face. The fact that Cho Ryu Hyang would work with mathematics as a profession in the future already brought satisfaction to him. But if that information was sent to the public, it would be troublesome. It would bring some obstacles to Cho Ryu Hyang in life.

Right now, the view on math wasn’t very positive.

A useless subject.

Something that only merchants learnt.

That was [how mathematics was viewed](#) to the world.

(TL: According to confucianism (which a lot of Asians followed) merchants were viewed as the lowest class in society, even lower than artists and craftsmen.)

Jo Gi Chun kept studying math only because he enjoyed the art. He didn't care one bit about what others said about him. But Cho Ryu Hyang was different.

‘You can't predict anything about the future.....’

Cho Ryu Hyang.

His disciple was still young.

Very young.

Because of that, his mind might change any moment.

Right now, his clan dealt with government matters, so the child was naturally interested in math. But this interest could be snuffed out at any given moment.

And since he had a good head on his shoulders, he could either advance as a high ranking government official, or advance in the world of martial arts by practicing it. The paths the boy could take right now were endless. So even though the boy was studying

under Jo Gi Chun right now, there was no need to tell anyone about it. It would only serve to become shackles for the boy.

If you think about the boy's young age, it wasn't right to try to decide the boy's future on his own. After sorting out his complicated feelings, he walked slowly to his house. He was going to leave his baggage there, and was going to think of a way to approach his disciple quietly.

Although Jo Gi Chun didn't realize it, there was someone who was watching him from far away from a while back. No, to be specific, the man was watching Jo Gi Chun from afar for the whole day.

‘He’s finally alone. But.....’

The man in red had a troubled look on his face.

This mission was on a different scale from all the other jobs he received before.

First of all, the man he was about to approach was not a martial artist. He was an old man who was devoted to a field that wasn't even recognized by the world. And instead of killing the man, he had to take the old man safely to the base. This was what troubled him.

The only missions he did so far was abduction, murder, and arson. He wasn't used to such “peaceful” missions.

‘I don’t really want to do this, but whatever.’

This was an order from his master.

Orders were absolute.

He had to accomplish it by any means.

The man clicked his tongue.

He knew that he just missed his chance the approach the target properly.

The old man was about to leave the house after leaving his baggage.

‘If I let this go, I wouldn’t know how long I’d have to wait to find the right chance again.’

The man in red, after thinking a bit, revealed his body from the shadows.

The man stood in front of the door, blocking it.

Jo Gi Chun’s eyes held a tinge of surprise in it.

“You are Jo Gi Chun, yes?”

“.....Who are you?”

“This one’s from the Heavenly Demon Church. I came here to meet you because of a secret mission.”

Jo Gi Chun became surprised for a moment, but he immediately calmed himself down. Then he started to observe the young man in front of him,

The man’s probably a martial artist.

Jo gi Chun would’ve probably died already if the man wanted to kill him.

But seeing that the man was being polite to him, he probably had something else in mind.

‘The Heavenly Demon Church?’

Even though JO Gi Chun was unfamiliar with the Martial world, but he have heard of the Heavenly Demon Church countless times.

“The Demon Church.....”

Since he only heard bad things about the organization, he began

looking at the man with a cautious gaze. As if the man read Jo Gi Chun's thoughts, the man's face became troubled.

“It seems you already know about us.”

“A little..... I've heard rumors about it.”

The man in red.

The leader of the Hidden Demon Corps (秘魔隊), Um Seung Do (嚴繩盜) swore in his mind. It would've been better if the man didn't know about it. Since first impressions were actually very powerful, it would surely work against for Um Seung Do.

“Rumors in the martial world tends to get out of control easily. In a bad way at that..... We are not the evil organization that you think we might be.”

“.....That's that, but what do you want with me, to appear just like that?”

The old man's cautious gaze did not change, as he tried to change the subject. Um Seung Do gave up on changing the old man's mind about how he viewed the church. Even if he tried to explain, the old man probably wouldn't believe him, and he didn't have time to explain, anyways. He was really tight on time.

“There is a matter that we need help with. Only you can help us in this matter.”

“.....This old man’s only good at mathematics.....”

Um Seung Do smiled in his mind.

The old man, as expected, knew next to nothing about the Heavenly Demon Church.

The Heavenly Demon Church isn’t a simple martial arts organization. They were a gigantic group, that was more careful and subtle than any other groups in the world. They made no mistakes in their work.

The same could be said with this mission.

Um Seung Do probably knew more about the old man than the old man did himself.

“We know that you are extremely skilled in formations, professor.”

“.....”

Although Jo Gi Chun didn’t show it, he was extremely surprised.

He worked with formations in the imperial palace. It was done with absolute secrecy, too. He didn’t think anyone would know about it..... How could he not be surprised, when a man he saw for

the first time in his life revealed his secret just like that?

“You’ve done your share of research, it seems.”

“This is basic.”

Looking at the smiling man in front of him, Jo Gi Chun felt that this man was not that simple.

It wasn’t possible to try to hide anything from someone like this. Thankfully, the man didn’t look like he came to harm him, so Jo Gi Chun decided to hear him out for the moment.



“I didn’t know a visitor would come, so please understand if the presentation is a bit subpar.”

“No need.”

After sitting in the seat offered to him, Um Seung Do looked around the room a little.

As expected, this man was very frugal. There weren’t any decor in the room, only a bed, desk, and some chairs.

‘Based on his personality, trying to slowly persuade him would just be a waste of time.’

After pouring cold tea from the teapot to his cup, Jo Gi Chun spoke up.

His question was rather straightforward.

“Is the request related to formations?”

“Yes. We’ve found the most complicated formation under the heavens, and need the best of the best to decrypt it.”

Jo Gi Chun thought a bit. This was a very troublesome request.

He never really liked getting involved with the martial world from the start, but this event gave out an ominous feeling, at that.

An ominous feeling.

The words from the man in front gave Jo Gi Chun plenty of it.

Did the man sense his hesitation?

The man opened his mouth again.

“The payment will be bigger than you would imagine.”

“I’m not worried about the payment.”

“Is there something else you want?”

To be truthful, Jo Gi Chun was equally interested in formations as much as he was interested in mathematics.

The most complicated formation under the heavens?

He wanted to see it for himself.

“.....Aren’t there more talented people than I when it comes to formations?”

Um Seung Do shook his head.

He then spoke with an adamant face.

“No. That’s because we need someone talented in mathematics and formations both.”

Jo Gi Chun thought for a little bit, thought of someone, and opened his mouth.

“I know another person that will suit this job more. How about taking him instead?”

Um Seung Do already knew about who this man was.

“Is it perhaps Ju Ho Yu from the imperial palace?”

“.....You already knew this much?”

“Contacting him was impossible, which is why we came to you.”

Ju Ho Yu.

He was a person who pushed down Jo Gi Chun with skill. He could be considered the very best in mathematics in the world. He was a strange person who pursued mathematics, even though he

was born in a rich family, with a clever head.

Jo Gi Chun put on a troubled face while Um Seung Do was thinking about Ju Ho Yu. He didn't realize the man would even know about Ju Ho Yu.

"I'm sorry, but I do not think I can perform what you are asking me to do."

Um Seung Do glared at the old scholar.

Was it because he was a scholar?

It seems the old man didn't know how scary he could be.

Should he educate the old man?

'No, now's not the time to do this.'

This mission required full cooperation from the subject. The importance of all this was far too great to just use threats or lures.

Using force will only be used when all else fails. After calming himself a bit, Um Seung Do thought of something.

This was strange.

According to his sources, when Jo Gi Chun made his move, there were no real obstacles that prevented him from doing it. He had family, but they lived apart, and he wasn't a person to be attached to such things. He was a strange person that wanted to be alone.

A person like this, who's crazy for math and formation, rejecting this sort of a request? There was something else here going on that he didn't know.

‘What would it be?’

The Heavenly Demon Church's information network was far bigger than even the martial world realized. They were able to learn about anything they deemed useful in an instant. But Jo Gi Chun didn't have it. He didn't have anything that would restrain him from refusing this.

Um Seung Do even thought that Jo Gi Chun would go crazy when he told him about the formation. His calculations were far off. He decided to be a little more honest.

“If there's anything on your mind, you can tell me. Anything you want other than the payment is fine, too. We aren't one of those stingy organizations you might think we are. We know how to repay a debt.”

He stopped himself from saying that they didn't forget betrayals, either.

Jo Gi Chun was thinking.

He didn't realize that he was actually standing on the fine line of life and death, but there were actually quite a lot of things that he was worried about. And the biggest worry on his mind.

He wasn't sure if he should actually tell the man in front of him about this.

‘The most complicated formation.....’

If he said he wasn't interested, it would be a lie.

Like Um Seung Do thought, Jo Gi Chun indeed was a person who'd go crazy over math and formations.

But this mission was dangerous.

It was an extremely enticing, yet equally dangerous offer. After thinking for a long time, Jo Gi Chun thought up something.

“Is it really the most complicated formation under the heavens?”

“Indeed.”

“You want me to decrypt it?”

“Yes.”

Jo Gi Chun nodded.

“Then I want to bring one more person with me. That is the condition.”

“.....Like I said before, this is an extremely secretive mission, so it would be better if little to no people knew about it.”

Um Seung Do never realized a loner like Jo Gi Chun would request something like this. So that’s why he said he would grant almost any condition. If the person Jo Gi Chun wanted to bring was really outrageous, he would’ve refused immediately, and started threatening the old man a little, but the words out of the scholar’s mouth was something unexpected.

“I have a disciple. I wish to bring him with me.”

Um Seung Do’s face hardened.

He felt that this was a hard request to refuse.



Chapter 10. Vanished Cho Ryu Hyang

Following Jo Gi Chun to meet his disciple.

Um Seung Do's face at the moment was very ugly.

‘How pitiful.’

He wasn't able to come up with a reason to decline Jo Gi Chun's request.

Of course, that was one of the reasons that annoyed him, but there was still an even bigger reason that made him angry.

He was unable to predict something like this, even though he was a person who handled information in the first place. This fact bothered him very much. He sought perfection in his work, and found satisfaction from it.

Eventually, he couldn't hold it back, and asked.

“When did you take in your disciple?”

This was actually a very shameful question, at least for him.

That was because he usually knew the answer to his questions before he even asked them. Jo Gi Chun, unaware of the man's complicated feelings, answered immediately.

“About four days.”

“Four days?”

“Yes.”

Um Seung Do's face brightened a little when he heard Jo Gi Chun's answer.

Four days was a little tight for information to arrive properly, wasn't it?

This wasn't an extremely urgent mission, either, so there was a possibility of a 4 day gap of information happening.

‘But it is a problem we'll have to address properly.’

Um Seung Do arrived where Cho Ryu Hyang stayed, as he was thinking that.

The moment Jo Gi Chun and Um Seung Do arrived in front of the place.

Um Seung Do put his hand on his sword hilt immediately.

At the same time, a strange humming noise ringed in his ears.

Kiing–

He reflexively jumped backwards, and looked at his surroundings.

‘What’s this?’

Um Seung Do narrowed his eyes, and tried to find something. His face soon crumbled in irritation.

‘A mistake? No way.’

Um Seung Do’s face wrinkled even more.

He was an extremely strong expert.

While he didn’t reach the harmonious state yet, his senses were far above those of normal people.

With these senses, he felt something.

A very ominous energy.

‘What was that?’

He kept himself alert, but there wasn't anything particularly strange in the surroundings.

But the strange feeling was still in his mind, and it annoyed him.

Jo Gi Chun, who was staring at the man as if he was observing an insane person, spoke up.

“Anything wrong?”

“.....It's nothing.”

The man wouldn't know even if he said anything.

Um Seung Do kept observing his surroundings. Making an irritated face, he fiddled with his sword hilt.

Something mysterious was provoking his senses, but he didn't know where, or what it was. This made him feel very uncomfortable. Jo Gi Chun looked at him strangely for a while, then turned around, and spoke up.

“I came here to meet Cho Ryu Hyang. Can you bring him out?”

The old manservant in front of him, who looked very troubled at the moment, looked at Jo Gi Chun and spoke.

“The yo, young master isn’t here right now.”

Jo Gi Chun made a puzzled face.

Wasn’t the boy supposed to be sick?

Then why was he not in his living quarters?

After analyzing the old servant’s face for a little, he opened his mouth with a serious voice.

“Is there something going on?”

The servant opened his mouth anxiously when Jo Gi Chun asked him.

“Tha, that is.....”

Grandpa Jang’s face twisted a little bit, and he closed his mouth.

Jo Gi Chun, noticing that something was wrong, immediately asked him.

“This is an important matter. If he’s not here, can you at least tell me where he is?”

“Well, I thought the young master was in the back yard..... He

suddenly disappeared, so I was trying to find him.”

“He disappeared?”

“Yes.”

Jo Gi Chun tilted his head in curiosity.

In normal circumstances, he wouldn't have thought much about it, but wasn't this boy sick? Where was he going with a body like that?

Um Seung Do, who was thinking by himself till now, stepped up and asked Grandpa Jang something.

“Old man, is there something behind the house?”

Grandpa Jang, pressured by the young man's aura, opened his mouth with a weak voice.

“.....Th, there's nothing special at the back. Just a back yard is all.”

“Yard? May I have a look at it?”

“Yes, of course. Please follow me.”

When they followed the small path at the side, they reached a small yard with a big tree.

“The young master was here just now..... When I prepared his meal and came to look for him, he just wasn’t there.”

Jo Gi Chun took a look at Um Seung Do.

The man was observing the yard from a while back. Soon, he found a rope tied to the tree, and asked something.

“Was that always there?”

“No. I think the young master put it there, but I don’t know what it’s for.”

Um Seung Do started pondering a bit when he saw the rope.

‘It’s here.’

When Um Seung Do came to the yard, he became certain.

It was here.

The thing that kept provoking his senses.

When he came here, his muscles tensed, and his neck grew stiff.

And that feeling just became a lot stronger.

This was much too clear to be false.

‘What’s this? Why am I feeling something so ominous here?’

Um Seung Do looked around with a frown, but there weren’t anything significant around. But his senses kept warning him of something.

This place is dangerous.

So don’t carelessly move around.

His senses were telling him this repeatedly.

Um Seung Do trusted his senses.

Thanks to his senses, he was able to survive multiple times, after all.

And in front of him, there was some kind of invisible danger.

Because he didn’t know what the danger was just yet, approaching it any more would be foolish.

When he made this conclusion, Jo Gi Chun was, at the moment, also searching for something with a troubled face.

‘Could it be?’

It shouldn’t be possible.

But the signs on the floor soon turned his assumption to absolute certainty.

After looking at the signs on the floor multiple times, Jo Gi Chun’s face became filled with concern. Without realizing it, he started to hum in worry.

“mm....”

It was certain.

This was a formation.

A formation that he gave to Cho Ryu Hyang as homework.

‘Eight Gates Restraining Formation (八門禁鎖陳).’

The question is, why is it here?

He could technically say that the boy just drew it there on a

whim.

But that would be impossible.

Activating a formation was actually quite tricky, since there were a lot of requirements that had to be met.

And even if you meet all the requirements, the formation would not activate. That is because the formation would need a core.

‘Then how’d he activate it?’

Jo Gi Chun became confused here.

If you want to activate a good formation, typically you’d need a giant diamond as its core.

If you wanted to keep the formation active for long, you’d need to have a diamond that matched the element of the formation in large amounts.

Only the imperial palace was able to maintain a good, large formation, since the cost of it would be beyond measure.

“Don’t move. There’s something in front of us.”

Jo Gi Chun’s eyes revealed a surprised expression.

He thought that Um Seung Do was a typical martial artist, but it seemed that the man was more outstanding than he realized.

Formations usually twist the energy of nature by a miniscule amount to create an artificial dimension. But since the dimension is completely isolated from the world, it would be extremely difficult to feel anything.

‘He was able to detect that miniscule change?’

That meant that the man was an expert among experts.

“You can feel the energy of the formation?”

“Formation? Aha! So this is a formation?”

Um Seung Do’s eyes reflected wonder.

Everything became clearer to him now.

This strange feeling and the ominous aura.

This is what he feels when he approaches a formation.

“Do you know what happened?”

Jo Gi Chun, hearing Um Seung Do's question, stroked his beard and fell to deep thought. It was hard to believe, but the one who created this formation was probably Cho Ryu Hyang.

‘So the person trapped inside would be him.’

Jo Gi Chun's face stiffened.

The Eight Gates Restraining formation was a formation that activated when ‘something alive’ was inside.

That was the requirement.

Jo Gi Chun walked forward.

“Will you be alright?”

“Yes.”

The formation exuded a magnificent aura.

And seeing that the air was moving about strangely, there should be something happening inside. Because of that, Um Seung Do had a worried expression on his face. He then thought of something, and nodded.

The man is an expert.

Worrying about him would simply mean that Um Seung Do didn't trust Jo Gi Chun's skills.

"I'll wait here."

"Sure."

Jo Gi Chun walked forward.

Um Seung Do was watching Jo Gi Chun from the back with bright eyes.

'This is good.'

He would be able to witness Jo Gi Chun's power with his own eyes. Although Jo Gi Chun was pushed off by Ju Ho Yu, his skills were still rumored to be unmatched.

'Would those rumors actually be true?'

Um Seung Do sat down on the ground, and looked forward.

And he just watched.

He just watched Jo Gi Chun disappear into thin air.....

Cho Ryu Hyang, who was trapped in the formation, sat down.

He tried to make a sense of what just happened, while scratching his head.

‘How did this...’

The formation activating was a good thing.

No, it wasn’t a good thing, it was a very satisfactory result.

That was because this whole thing meant quite a bit to Cho Ryu Hyang.

That was because all the information he’d been absorbing till now finally saw practical use.

But he got too excited.

Cho Ryu Hyang, after coming up with multiple excuses as to why he ended up here, sighed.

What kind of an idiot trapped himself in the formation he made?

That idiot was here.

‘I’m an idiot!’

Cho Ryu Hyang stopped himself from saying it out loud, and made a depressed face. When he was putting down the last stone, he realized where he was, but it was too late by then. He wanted to cry.

‘And...’

The bigger problem wasn’t this.

Although he knew how to activate a formation perfectly well, he still didn’t know how to destroy it. This was bothering him very much.

‘I don’t even have time to regret.’

It was troublesome.

Then someone’s voice rang inside his head.

[Well, you’re in quite the situation.]

When the voice rang in his head, Cho Ryu Hyang looked around.

Then he thought of something, and closed his eyes.

‘Elder, is it you?’

[Yes, it’s me.]

What’s going on?

How could he hear the old man even if his eyes weren’t closed?

When Cho Ryu Hyang made a confused face, the old man talked.

[There’s nothing to be confused about. This just means that your power just rose. Anyways, I’ve been enjoying your little spectacle here. Quite an interesting approach. Idiotic, too.]

Cho Ryu Hyang scratched his cheeks with an awkward expression.

He didn’t think the old man would observe his actions.

While he was trying to see if he did anything weird before, the old man talked.

[Well, that’s that. So, how are you going to get out of here?]

Cho Ryu Hyang came back to his senses.

It wasn't time to chat idly with the old man.

But he became a little relieved. Was there not the best formations expert under the heavens, Zhuge Liang, in his head? It didn't matter if the old man was Zhuge Liang or not, this formation should still be easy for him.

‘Please help me, elder.’

Unexpectedly, he got a cold response.

[Why?]

‘.....?’

Cho Ryu Hyang couldn't hide his confusion when he heard the old man's response. The old man smiled at him.

[I can't just help you like that. You did this, so fix it yourself.]

‘Elder!’

Cho Ryu Hyang asked for help with a distressing voice, but the old man didn't reply.

He was actually enjoying the current situation.

It was very interesting.

He wanted to watch for a little longer.

‘The boy managed to open the Mystical Door (奇門) without being taught anything? A 11 year old at that?’

If the old man didn’t see it with his eyes, he would’ve found all this hard to believe.

The Mystical Door was something extremely complex, and ever-changing. It required an immense amount of calculation to open.

It was arguably the hardest field in the subject of mathematics. But the boy managed to solve it on his own. He knew the boy had talent, but this was just outrageous. That’s why Cho Ryu Hyang’s existence became a relatively fresh experience to the old man.

‘Just how far will you go?’

It was the same in the past, but activating formations really does have lots of requirements.

The person has to find out the variable’s value, based on the ever-changing surroundings, and must put in the answer at the perfect time. Only then will the variable become the core of the formation, and be able to create a dimension of its own.

The old man stroked his beard a bit, and laughed.

To be able to understand that at that age, the boy's surely going to become a monster in the future.

He wanted to see it.

How far the boy would go.

He wanted to see where the boy would stop.

‘Well, right now, seeing if the boy would get out of this or not would be more important.’

The old man carefully observed Cho Ryu Hyang's every movement.

Right then.

Rumble–!

The surroundings suddenly started to change.



‘It’s begun.’

Unlike Cho Ryu Hyang, whose face was turning pale, the old man was feeling quite comfortable at the moment. He knew very well what kind of formation it was. He knew about every nook and cranny. And of course, he knew how to destroy it.

‘Well, I made it, so it’s obvious.’

The old man faintly smiled.

He wanted to see how the boy would destroy the formation that he made a long time ago. The old man was feeling quite joyous as he watched the boy with a hushed breath.

Chapter 11. Cho Ryu Hyang In Trouble

The old man from the picture.

The various formations he made for fun in the past.

Out of those formations, Cao Cao managed to get a glimpse of the Eight Gates Restraining Formation, and used it as a military formation. When he claimed that he made the formation on his own, the old man just smiled.

And when people started saying that Cao Cao was the one who created the formation, the old man pretended to not know about it. Who created the formation didn't really matter to him. He actually gave some credit to Cao Cao for being able to use it so perfectly like that.

But the formation that Cho Ryu Hyang showed to Jo Gi Chun just now was incomplete in many ways. The old man was able to figure that out the instant he saw it.

‘He made it like that on purpose?’

To think that this boy, who knew quite a bit about formations, would do this. It wasn't just that. The boy fixed the holes in his formation with his own ways, and made it complete.

It didn't seem possible for a young boy like this.

It too surprising.

And exciting.

Even though the old man made this on a whim, this formation had some profound mysteries contained within it. If a person was unable to find this out, the person would be unable to live in such a place.

‘Now, show me. Show me how big your talent is.’

The old man was already excited to see how Cho Ryu Hyang would overcome this.

‘Could it be? Already?’

Unlike the old man, who was overflowing with relaxedness, Cho Ryu Hyang at the moment was completely bewildered.

Suppressing his scream inside himself, he trying to gain his surroundings.

Right then, the ground flew up right in front of his eyes, and became a wall of stone. 3 more flew up, and completely sealed Cho Ryu Hyang inside.

‘The Restraints (鎖) already activated?’

This formation started off with sealing a person from the outside world completely. Right now, the space Cho Ryu Hyang was given was only about 1 [pyeong](#).

‘I’m done for.’

Cho Ryu Hyang gave up on asking for help, and quickly looked around.

He was trying to find a way to survive.

While doing so, he stretched his hand out towards the wall.

It was simple curiosity.

He wanted to see if the wall in front of him was real or not.

He could feel the hardness of the stone wall.

“Ah!”

Forgetting the fact that he was in grave danger, Cho Ryu Hyang shouted in admiration. This was a formless illusion. It had to be. For the illusion to feel “real” even though he was aware of what it was... was this not surprising?

‘It has form? Haha, how can this even.....’

He never thought such a strange thing was even possible, from the time he was born. Logically, this was impossible. But the impossible was happening right before his eyes. It was his own creation, too.

At that thought, Cho Ryu Hyang felt a bit proud, and desperate at the same time. He made the formation so perfect, he couldn't find a way to get out.

Cho Ryu Hyang, who was hitting at the stone walls, thought a bit.

‘The formation will start moving again in about 15 minutes.’

According to his calculations, once the formation trapped someone inside, after 15 minutes, the first transformation would take place. Before that happened, Cho Ryu Hyang would have to come up with a way to escape. If he calculated correctly, he wouldn't even survive the first level of the eight total transformations. And if he died here, he'd have died a stupid death.

‘I can't let that happen.’

Cho Ryu Hyang ground his teeth.

And thought.

‘The first transformation will take place from the north.’

North, South, East, West.

The nucleus of the formation was there, where the greatest changes would take place in.

‘Storming water from the north....’

After calculating for a moment, Cho Ryu Hyang scratched his head.

According to the results, the effect of the transformation would be unbearably strong.

‘The first would be the harmony of the [Black Tortoise](#).’

The 4 beasts that represented the 4 directions.

The formation was being decrypted based on the beasts.

The Azure Dragon, White Tiger, Pheonix, and the Black Tortoise.

The first of the 4 beasts would be the water god (水神) of the north.

The Black Tortoise’s harmony meant that a great wave was going

to appear soon.

The problem was, he didn't know how to deal with it, even if he knew it.

For normal formations experts, this was a rather puzzling situation. When you knew how to make and activate a formation, naturally you would also know how to destroy it.

If an expert of Cho Ryu Hyang's caliber got trapped in the formation, then he/she would be able to break through in less than 15 minutes. That was because the formations experts learned about formations not by mathematics, but by the movements of the world.

But unfortunately, Cho Ryu Hyang wasn't a formations expert.

He never really learned about formations in the first place.

The only thing he knew about was math. Relying only on math, he was trying to break through the formation. Naturally, this would be hard.

'What does the Black Tortoise represent? How do I get out of here alive?'

The more he thought, the more he realized how much trouble he was in. In order to get out alive, he kept thinking. And while he struggled like so, death quickly approached him.

All of the sudden, a feeling of desolation fell upon him.

Swallow–

Cho Ryu Hyang swallowed his spit out of nervousness.

The air started to vibrate.

vmmmm–

The first transformation.

It was about to happen now.

krrrg–

The ground hurtled upwards.

When Cho Ryu Hyang looked at the top with difficulty, he could make out the newly-formed cliff starting to crumble.

Then he saw.

The sight blocked by the cliff.

“Ha... Hahaha...”

The slight smell that tickled his nose.

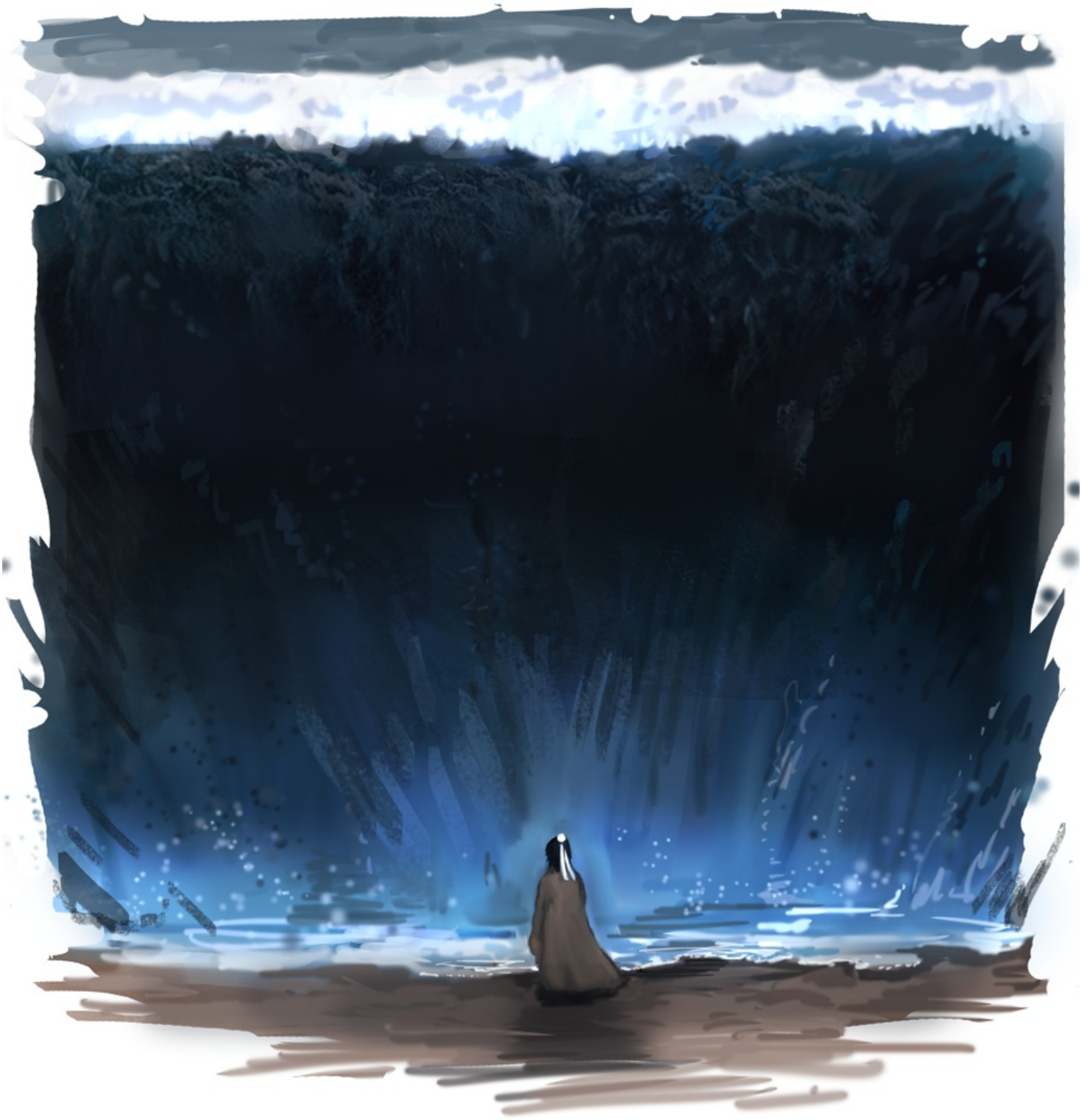
Cho Ryu Hyang laughed without knowing it.

This was so inconceivable, he just started laughing.

‘Isn’t this a bit too much?’

Mangyung Changpa (萬頃蒼波: Unfathomable wave)

Once he saw what was above the cliff, that word came to mind. He saw a sea that seemed to never end. The sea that seemed to be able to touch the sky, to boot.



The sea was raging.

Guoo—

The berserk winds proved just how strong the waves were.

The first transformation.

The Black Tortoise's wrath.

A giant tsunami was rapidly approaching Cho Ryu Hyang.

‘Think. I have to think. If I don’t want to die here, I have to think!’

Cho Ryu Hyang's eyes shined as he fixed his glasses.

There should be a safe location somewhere.

This wasn't a simple prediction or anything.

In a formation, there existed a door of life (生門), and the door of death (死門).

Since Cho Ryu Hyang didn't officially learn formations, this was all he knew, but this was enough.

Cho Ryu Hyang started to slowly fumbled around the floor as he solved equations in his head.

‘There's a total of 8 places that oversee the transformations. The door of life should be one of those.’

There were a total of 8 variables in the formation.

Since one of the variables activated, that one variable should be safe out of the other seven. The problem was, he didn't know where that was.

But Cho Ryu Hyang didn't give up.

He was currently standing on an island.

An island that was only about 1 pyeong. It was surrounded by water on all sides, and on that island, was Cho Ryu Hyang, who was frantically searching for something.

As the island was small, Cho Ryu Hyang found what he was looking for quickly.

But he hesitated for a moment.

'Is this really it?'

A stone small enough to fit a small child. Looking at the wide, flat stone that exudes an aura different from other stones, Cho Ryu Hyang thought a bit.

The stone represented "5" according to his calculation.

Out of the 8 vertexes in the formation, it represented the South. The opposite of the Water God's position.

Cho Ryu Hyang had to make a choice sooner or later.

The situation was quite dire right now.

One wrong choice meant death.

Cho Ryu Hyang adjusted his glasses' position with a trembling hand, and made a bitter smile.

If you think logically, since the Water God represented the North, it would make sense to go into the Northern vertex.

But then, a feeling of suspicion quickly rose up, and changed Cho Ryu Hyang's mind.

A very simple thought.

'It can't be this easy.'

When he looked back at the activation of the formation, the formation required a tremendous amount of equations to be solved. There were variables involved, too. It was too complicated. So complicated, it felt like his head could explode. It wasn't possible for a solution to come out easily like that.

No way.

A feeling of rejection rose up.

And the conclusion he reached was this.

But he had no confidence.

Was his first answer right? Or was his second answer right?

‘There’s a 50/50 chance. No, it seems lower, actually.’

Kugagagak–!

Looking at the giant tsunami that was right in front of him, Cho Ryu Hyang chuckled.

He could see the white foam on the tsunami now.

He had to make his choice.

In mathematics, probabilities were the most unstable way of solving equations. That was why Cho Ryu Hyang tried to not rely on it if possible.

‘And....’

He was moving towards the answer with less probability of survival. Looking at his actions, he laughed.

The suspicion that rose up before.

He decided to believe in his senses.

When Cho Ryu Hyang moved his body to the desired spot.

The tsunami overtook him.

‘It’s strange.’

Jo Gi Chun, who was currently located at the border of the formation, stroked his beard with a puzzled face.

This was very strange.

He noticed it the moment he entered the first transformation.

The Eight Gates Restraining Formation.

He could say he knew the most about it, as he was the one that restored the formation from the historic records.

‘And...’

When you look at the Three Kingdoms book, there appears a figure known as “Cao Cao”. This figure was known for creating the Eight Gates Restraining formation, and use it as a military formation. It was also said that Liu Bei was the first one to get through this formation.

Anyways, the normal Eight Gates Restraining Formation was a military formation made to restrain a large amount of soldiers effectively, and kill them. Jo Gi Chun simply converted that military formation, and turned it into the standard formation.

The use of a military formation clearly differs from a standard formation. But the main idea of the formations aren’t that different.

‘It should open just about now....’

There were 8 profound laws in the formation. Jo Gi Chun knew that well, which was why he was waiting on the edge of the formation. If he waited there, there should be a wall that would appear soon enough.

But what was this? Instead of a wall, a giant stone wall appeared in front of Jo Gi CHun. When he touched it, he was extremely surprised by how real it felt.

‘Just what did the boy do?’

This kind of realism couldn’t be achieved with the formation he gave the boy. This much realism was comparable to the Heaven’s Might Appearing Formation (顯靈天武大陳) that was placed in the imperial palace.

‘But....’

Jo Gi Chun looked closely at the ground.

It looked sturdy.

But it wasn’t like he couldn’t get through it.

Jo Gi Chun, who gave Cho Ryu Hyang this formation in the first place, knew the weakness of this formation. The weakness he put in on purpose.

He made the formation weak on purpose.

Since he already knew all there was to know about formations, he made it so that the formation was easy to get out of.

But since he made it up on the spot, he was afraid that Cho Ryu Hyang would’ve found it and fixed it. Jo Gi Chun was looking for that small hole there.

‘About now...’

A good formation would change freely over time.

A formation would only be complete if it had complete freedom in its own region, thereby creating unexpected events inside.

Jo Gi Chun moved about, observing the ground. He soon came to a halt somewhere.

He began counting numbers patiently.

Soon, he stretched out his hand.

‘Now.’

Crumble–

The stone wall in front of him crumbled with a touch.

An entrance was created, but Jo Gi Chun’s face wasn’t looking very well.

No, it looked worse than before.

‘Just what have you done?’

The formation was at least 10 times stronger than average.

Jo Gi Chun’s face went stiff.

Chapter 12. Find Cho Ryu Hyang!

Normally, instead of the wall breaking down, the formation itself should've been destroyed.

That was how Jo Gi Chun set it up.

‘Haha. Did he perhaps change the whole of the formation by himself?’

It was unbelievable, but it seemed that was what actually happened. The boy was truly amazing. He didn't know how the boy managed this. The boy just kept on surprising him.

Drrr....

The stone wall was trying to restore itself.

It was time for him to make a decision.

Jo Gi Chun didn't know how the boy managed to complete an unstable formation like this, as this didn't even remotely resemble the formation he gave the boy. Because of that, the risk he was trying to take was even more dangerous.

‘Dangerous?’

Jo Gi Chun smiled bitterly. Going into a formation he didn't

know about was suicide. Normally, he'd try to observe the flow of the formation, calculate answers based on the observation, and recalculate until he became sure that the answer he came up with would break the formation.

But Jo Gi Chun couldn't do that right now. Cho Ryu Hyang was surely in this formation. The boy was his first disciple, and his disciple managed to get in this situation because of the homework Jo Gi Chun gave the boy. Hesitating here would simply be a waste of time. Jo Gi Chun walked towards the entrance, stroking his beard with a trembling hand.

The first transformation in the Eight Gates Restraining formation.

Jo Gi Chun wasn't sure of how powerful the transformation would be.

The moment Jo Gi Chun was entering the formation, Cho Ryu Hyang was wiping his forehead.

'I was lucky.'

He was really lucky. It seemed that his senses triumphed over math for the first time.

The tsunami turned into a giant ocean in a flash. But the place Cho Ryu Hyang stayed in wasn't flooded at all. While looking at this strange phenomenon, Cho Ryu Hyang scratched his head. This

was quite troubling.

After a while, the first transformation will end. The second transformation would begin immediately after. How should Cho Ryu Hyang endure through the next transformation? Just a while ago, he was able to live because there were only 2 choices. There was a 50/50 chance of living.

But after this? There's 3 choices. Would he be lucky like last time? Thinking that, Cho Ryu Hyang made a pained face.

[There's an intruder.]

When Cho Ryu Hyang heard this voice in his head, he immediately turned his head. He could see a figure far away from him. And this person was someone Cho Ryu Hyang knew well.

“Teacher?”

In the dark depths of the ocean. Under the great sea, an old man was slowly walking with a tired expression. It was Jo Gi Chun.

Cho Ryu Hyang stood up in surprise, and stepped forward. The moment he did so, a voice came into his mind.

[You really are an idiot....]

His sight became messed up. The sea came at him full force. Cho

Ryu Hyang's whole body became heavy, as his clothes got wet. But Cho Ryu Hyang endured this and grit his teeth. He knew what was coming at him this time.

But he still moved. His teacher was in danger. He didn't know why his teacher was here. No, he didn't need to know. To Cho Ryu Hyang, none of that was important right now.

‘I need to save him.’

Cho Ryu Hyang stabilized his body as much as possible, trying not to be swept away from the waves. His teacher was saying something towards him since a while back. Looking at the teacher, Cho Ryu Hyang tried imitating what the teacher was saying with his mouth,

‘Look at your... meet?’

Just what did that mean? Cho Ryu Hyang could feel that his body was running out of breath quickly. His chest was tightening.

Seeing that, Jo Gi Chun's face showed urgency, and he started to repeat what he was saying earlier. Cho Ryu Hyang caught something then. He could see his teacher come towards him with a weird footwork.

‘Look at your feet?’

That was it.

Cho Ryu Hyang understood what his teacher was trying to say. Jo Gi Chun was walking as if he was drunk since a while back. But would walking like that really help? Cho Ryu Hyang tried to imitate his teacher, but the situation just got worse. His body got heavier, and the waves got fiercer.



Right then.

[You idiot! When are you planning to use the technique I gave you!]

Cho Ryu Hyang came back to his senses.

The thing the old man taught him?

He then realized. This was a formation. A fake space created by humans. And he had the power to be able to look at the truth of the world at will.

‘The Faultless View of The World!’

Cho Ryu Hyang narrowed his eyes, after taking a deep breath. He could barely make out numbers that got strewn on the ground with his eyes. He started to walk towards a brightly shining blue number under him without realizing it.

“Eh?”

The pressure that pushed him down disappeared. He could breath again. Cho Ryu Hyang looked at his teacher in surprise. Jo Gi Chun, too, stared at Cho Ryu Hyang with a surprised expression.

Then, the blue number he was standing on started turning red. Then, the pressure returned, and Cho Ryu Hyang couldn't breath. He stepped towards another blue number in front. After walking in such a way for a while, he reached his teacher.

“Teacher!”

Jo Gi Chun had a really surprised expression. He asked his disciple a question.

“When did you learn the Disintegration Steps (破毀步) technique?”

“Disintegration Steps?”

Cho Ryu Hyang tried to think of what the teacher was talking about. He soon thought up of the teacher’s strange walking technique, and shook his head.

“I never learned such a thing.”

“Then how did you walk around the formation?”

Jo Gi Chun was really confused. When he came in and solved various problems to break through the walls, he could reach the place where his disciple was. It seemed that his student had thankfully gone to the door of life.

But relief won’t stay for long. The situation would get worse when the second transformation happens. He was walking towards his disciple by solving equations as quick as possible, but Cho Ryu Hyang just made a strange face, and walked straight to him.

This action just surprised Jo Gi Chun so much, he almost fell from where he was standing.

He did tell his student to try and imitate him, but he didn’t expect his disciple to be able to do it. But look at what happened! His disciple seemed a little lost in thought for a while, but after that, the boy came to him in a faster speed than he.

The boy managed to figure out the secret behind the

disintegration steps? This wasn't simply a matter of discussing whether the boy was a genius or not. Even Confucius wouldn't be able to achieve the boy's feat.

“Let's get out of here, then talk.”

“Yes.”

“Follow me.”

“Yes sir.”

Jo Gi Chun walked carefully. He completed an equation which would take a normal man tens of tries to get right in an instant. Cho Ryu Hyang looked at him carefully. He didn't know how teacher did it, but somehow his teacher managed to step on the blue numbers accurately without fail. How could his teacher do this without even knowing the Faultless View?

‘Amazing.’

Cho Ryu Hyang's teacher surely was looking at the formation differently than he.

He wanted to know how the teacher viewed the formation badly, but this was a bad time.

‘I should've used the Faultless View from the start.’

If he did that, he wouldn't have gotten so lost like that back there..... While Cho Ryu Hyang was regretting what happened before, a voice rang in his mind.

[Don't try to get everything the easy way, boy. What you went through today will surely aid you in the future.]

Cho Ryu Hyang, who momentarily forgot about the being in his head, scratched his cheeks.

‘Well, thank you.’

If it wasn't for the old man, Cho Ryu Hyang would've been a burden to his teacher, by stepping out of the safe zone. While he was thinking that, a suspicion rose in his mind.

‘Was the formation I made this big?’

They were walking around for almost half an hour, but they have yet to see the exit. The formation he drew in the real world was small, which should've affected the size of the formation here, too. At Cho Ryu Hyang's suspicion, the old man smiled.

[You guys are just walking in circles.]

Cho Ryu Hyang nodded his head. In a formation, your sense of direction completely vanishes. It felt like they were going the right

way, but that wasn't necessarily true. While Cho Ryu Hyang was organizing his thoughts that way, his teacher stopped walking.

“It's here.”

Cho Ryu Hyang looked around. It was an empty space. There was nothing special about it. His teacher smiled.

“Look carefully.”

When his teacher stepped forward, the teacher's whole body disappeared. When Cho Ryu Hyang followed, the whole world went bright.

“Are you alright, elder?”

“I'm alright.”

While Um Seung Do and Jo Gi Chun were exchanging words with each other, Cho Ryu Hyang tried to regain his surroundings. Wasn't he just walking around in the seafloor? To think that was nothing but an illusion..... Cho Ryu Hyang spaced out for a moment. Then, he started seeing something. The formation he made.....

‘This.....’

It was different. The stones he put there was broken to pieces.

“Just what happened?”

When Jo Gi Chun walked to him while massaging his shoulder, Cho Ryu Hyang came back to his senses and spoke.

“I’m sorry for worrying you, teacher.”

Jo Gi Chun nodded, and asked again.

“Yes, regarding that, how did you manage to activate the formation? And how did you know about the Disintegration steps?”

“That’s.....”

When Cho Ryu Hyang was about to explain what happened, he looked at Um Seung Do, who was looking at Cho Ryu Hyang at the moment.

“Before that, who’s he?”

Jo Gi Chun seemed to think of that just now, and opened his mouth.

“This man needs my help, it seems. He came from the Heavenly Demon Church.”

“The Heavenly Demon Church!”

Cho Ryu Hyang widened his eyes. Wasn't the Heavenly Demon church extremely famous in the Martial World? Looking at Cho Ryu Hyang's face change, Um Seung Do smiled a bitter smile.

“We're not as dangerous as you think.”

“.....”

Cho Ryu Hyang quickly realized his mistake, and his his shock.

“It's a pleasure to meet you. I heard you were the elder's disciple?”

“Yes.”

Cho Ryu Hyang was fully alert towards the man, who was being quite polite just then. He sensed suspicion in that man's gaze.

‘It's strange.’

Um Seung Do was indeed looking at Cho Ryu Hyang suspiciously. He would find out everything about the boy sooner or later. But now, he wasn't suspicious of the official info of the boy. Why was there something that only belonged in the Martial World on the boy's body?

‘He didn’t go through the Bone-Changing Growth, did he?’

This was a really nonsensical suspicion. The Bone-Changing Growth only happened when a martial artist went close to the Harmonious stage. That was why Um Seung Do knew about it.

But this strange suspicion kept coming back up. That was because he saw something on the boy that only could be seen when someone neared the Harmonious stage.

‘The halo.....’

It wouldn’t be visible to a normal person, but for a person like Um Seung Do, this was clearly visible. There was a light that was behind Cho Ryu Hyang for a brief moment.

‘Must be an imagination.’

He observed Cho Ryu Hyang for a while longer, but the light just disappeared. This just made everything more suspicious. After looking at the boy for a while longer, he retreated, and said this with a smile on his face.

“I’m sorry. It’s a habit I got from the job. My name is Um Seung Do, from the Heavenly Demon Church.”

“Cho Ryu Hyang.”

Cho Ryu Hyang fixed his glasses when he talked. He didn't like the man. Because of that, he took a look at his forehead unconsciously.

‘Fifty-eight.....’

The man was obviously more talented than normal people. Cho Ryu Hyang couldn't take him lightly.

“The elder agreed to help the main church with a certain event. But the elder said that he wanted to take you with him. What do you think?”

What did that mean? The man's voice clearly implied that he wanted Cho Ryu Hyang to refuse. Cho Ryu Hyang didn't respond, but instead looked at his teacher. He thought that there would be some more explanation. As expected, the teacher said something, too.

“The man said that he'd show the greatest formation under the heavens. I think this would help your education a bit, so I tried to take you with me. What do you think? You can say no if you want.”

Um Seung Do wrinkled his eyebrows, but stayed quiet. Say no? Is that possible at this point? This old man really didn't know how scary the church could be. Since they knew about the upcoming event already, they wouldn't be in a situation where they could even say no.

But Um Seung Do stopped himself from saying that. He didn't know what the young man in front of him would say.

‘The greatest formation?’

The moment he heard that, Cho Ryu Hyang's eyes sparkled. He didn't know much about formations, but he was already exposed to that part of the world.

The Greatest Formation! He wanted to see it. The formation he created just now was incredibly complicated already. How complex would the greatest formation be? Looking at the boy's expression, which started to be filled with expectations, Um Seung Do wrinkled his face.

‘They're of the same kind.’

There was a saying that those who are alike, stick together. While Um Seung Do was insulting the two like that, Cho Ryu Hyang opened his mouth.

“I think I should tell Grandpa first. He'd get worried if I didn't.”

“You do that.”

Jo Gi Chun nodded. He didn't ask the question he asked a while back. A while back, he was too excited to remember that Um Seung

Do was there. But not now. He wouldn't dare discuss such things while the dangerous man was nearby.

'I'll learn sooner or later.'

He was dying to know how the boy was able to do such wondrous deeds in the formation, but it wasn't the time to ask it now.

"So, the disciple's also going?"

"Yes. I'll be in your care."

"Yes, yes.... But we don't have much time, so can you hurry?"

Um Seung Do replied with a expression of defeat. He had to take this little boy too. He didn't really desire this to happen. It was better if fewer people knew about what was going on.....

He barely managed to persuade himself by saying that refusing outright would just bring him trouble. Um Seung Do's face full of sorrow contradicted with the boy's excited expression. The boy was the one who wanted to go, after all. He wanted to know what the formation would be like. He was happy, as he didn't know how fearsome the place where he was going to would be.

The decision he made just now. This decision would be the single thing that Cho Ryu Hyang would regret the most in his lifetime.

Chapter 13. Human Killing Medicine

Inside the moving carriage.

Cho Ryu Hyang, Um Seung Do, and Jo Gi Chun were all sitting in it.

Um Seung Do opened his mouth.

“Like I said before, we don’t have much time left. So we’ll have to go all the way to the church without stopping.”

Um Seung Do took out a small bottle as he spoke.

“I’m going to tell you this in advance. The trip isn’t going to be very comfortable. We’ll have to go as fast as possible, which will probably strain you both physically and mentally. We’ll still be moving as you two sleep.”

“How are we going to move while sleeping?”



They were traveling for over 6 hours already.

The carriage did not stop once, unless they had to go do their business. When Jo Gi Chun asked his question with a tired face, Um Seung Do opened the bottle, and answered the question.

“You will have to sleep in the carriage. I wanted to avoid this situation, but this really is urgent. Please, do understand.”

Jo Gi Chun’s face grew dark.

He wasn’t confident of these kind of trips, especially with his old age.

Um Seung Do, as if he had seen what Jo Gi Chun was thinking, said this with a smile.

“That’s why we brought this.”

“What’s that?”

“This is a very special pill that is made only in limited amounts by the church. This is one of our pride and joy, the Heavenly Demon Spirit Pill.”

“Heavenly Demon Spirit Pill?”

The Heavenly Demon Spirit Pill (天魔靈丹).

It wasn’t something really precious or rare.

But it was a pill that outclassed most pills that were made in the Martial World.

It was expensive to make, but it had the advantage of being able to be produced securely at any location. Seeing that the pope of the church controlled the production of this pill himself, one could see how valuable this pill actually was.

But Jo Gi Chun and his student had no way of knowing about this, as they weren’t from the Martial World. A treasure is only a treasure in the hands of someone who knows its value. Jo Gi Chun

and Cho Ryu Hyang both stared at Um Seung Do with a dull face.

Um Seung Do's proud face instantly crumbled. He asked the two a question.

“Could it be.... you never heard of this pill?”

“Yes.”

Um Seung Do bit his lip when he heard Jo Gi Chun's answer.

“How about you, young man?”

“I never heard of it.”

“Hnn.....”

Um Seung Do hummed a little in disappointment when he heard the answer.

It was a little bothersome to tell them all about the pill. He was caught in an annoying situation.

‘I'm not even a drug dealer.....’

Um Seung Do took out a small black pill, about the size of a fingernail, from the bottle.

“Well, this is a pill that is very good for you. I don’t really want to get into this, so just try it. The moment you put it in your mouth, you’ll see how good this is for you.”

Jo Gi Chun simply glanced at the black pill laid out in front of him, but didn’t take it. He was suspicious. Taking a pill like this and eating it without knowing its purpose was something only fools did.

Um Seung Do realized what Jo Gi Chun was thinking, and said this with a smile.

“It’s not harmful for your body.”

“.....”

Jo Gi Chun didn’t say anything.

“If the church wanted to harm you in any way, we wouldn’t have done this in this sort of a way. We would’ve done it very silently. So much so that even you wouldn’t realize we did something to you.”

“.....”

Jo Gi Chun still had a suspicious look on his face.

In the end, Um Seung Do shook his head, and said this.

“I’ll have to show you myself.”

Um Seung Do took one of the pills.

He put it in his mouth. The moment it touched his tongue, it melted like water, and flowed down his throat. Feeling the effects of the medicine with his own body, Um Seung Do said this with a proud expression.

“I think I just proved that this isn’t poison. What do you think?”

“.....I’ll take it if I really get tired later.”

When Jo gi Chun refused, Um Seung Do looked quite disappointed.

It seemed that Jo Gi Chun really didn’t see the church in a positive manner.

This was very sad for Um Seung Do, as he was a devout follower of the church.

Right then.

“I’ll take it.”

Um Seung Do looked at Cho Ryu Hyang with a surprised expression.

This was a reaction he didn't expect at all.

Um Seung Do asked a question with a happy face.

“You would take this pill?”

“Yes.”

Um Seung Do glanced at Jo Gi Chun.

Jo Gi Chun was looking at Cho Ryu Hyang with a hint of reproach.

“Aren't you suspicious of this pill?”

“Yes.”

“It could be poison, you know.”

“Didn't you just eat it yourself?”

Um Seung Do faintly smiled.

He wanted to tease the boy a little.

“I could have received a special training to resist poison, you know. Aren’t you suspicious of something like that?”

Cho Ryu Hyang fixed his glasses.

He then looked at Um Seung Do with a slightly confused face.

“Do you want me to not take this medicine?”

“Huh?”

“Could it be that this is too valuable for a child....”

“Definitely not.”

“It would be good for me to try the medicine right now, then. Right?”

Of course that was true.

Jo Gi Chun looked like he was about to collapse at any given moment. He should take the medicine before he really gets sick, but it was hard to convince the man.

In this situation, if Cho Ryu Hyang eats the pill now, and shows Jo Gi Chun that the pill was harmless, perhaps that man would take the pill. Um Seung Do thought quite highly of the boy when he realized that.

‘But.....’

Does the boy really trust in him that much?

Um Seung Do wanted to show the boy how scary the Martial World could be.

When he was about to open his mouth, Cho Ryu Hyang spoke up.

“Don’t misunderstand. I’m not eating it because I trust you. I would be a fool to trust you when I met you not long ago. I’m not that dumb.”

“.....”

Jo Gi Chun was like this, too, but this boy was also too honest.

When Um Seung Do was insulting Cho Ryu Hyang in his mind, the boy spoke.

“I don’t trust you, but I feel that that medicine is very effective. That’s why I’m saying I’d eat it.”

Um Seung Do was confused.

It sounded logical, but the sentence didn't make sense at all.

“This is indeed a precious medicine, but how did you know about it?”

Um Seung Do said this as he glared at Cho Ryu Hyang. He tried to search Cho Ryu Hyang with his gaze. Indeed, this boy was suspicious. Um Seung Do couldn't figure out what the boy was thinking. It felt like the boy was hiding many things.

‘What are you hiding?’

While Um Seung Do was thinking about such things, Cho Ryu Hyang, too, was organizing his thoughts quickly. He was able to know that the medicine was precious, using his unique sight.

But Cho Ryu Hyang didn't feel like telling the man about it. Like he said earlier, Cho Ryu Hyang didn't trust the man. Cho Ryu Hyang took off his glasses, rubbed his eyes, and spoke up.

“It's just instinct.”

“Ins....tinct?”

Um Seung Do made a surprised face. And that soon turned into a tired one. He was looking at the boy with a careful gaze. It seemed

that the halo he saw on the boy didn't leave his mind.

‘It was.... probably an imagination.’

Cho Ryu Hyang stretched out his hand.

Um Seung Do put a pill on the boy's hand.

“Will you be alright?”

When Jo Gi Chun said this with a worried face, Cho Ryu Hyang nodded.

The pill had a blue glow to it, when seen with his eyes.

When something had a blue glow, it usually meant it was good.

“It'll be alright.”

Without hesitation, Cho Ryu Hyang swallowed the pill.

“How is it?”

One of the good points of the pill was the fact that the effect was immediate.

When Um Seung Do looked at Cho Ryu Hyang confidently,

Cho Ryu Hyang's face contorted in pain.

Looking at that, Um Seung Do smirked.

“Ha, don't joke around like that. I'm scary when I get angered, you know.”

Cho Ryu Hyang's face didn't change when Um Seung Do said that.

It contorted even more.

dokun-

‘Huh?’

Cho Ryu Hyang put his hand over the place where his heart was, and made a pained expression. His heart started to beat faster, and his breath grew short.

‘What's this.....’

His whole body started trembling. Cho Ryu Hyang eventually fell down, while sweating profusely. His eyes were twitching, even.

Um Seung Do's face turned pale.

“A side effect? It can't be.....”

After thinking a bit, Um Seung Do's eyes shook.

The Heavenly Demon Pill wasn't the best pill to ever be created, but the church paid attention to the pills a lot because it didn't have any side effects.

However.

‘The medicine guy did say there was an exception.’

Um Seung Do looked back at his memories.

This pill was something that took years of research to be made. There was no side effect from this pill. Except one.

‘The reversed intestines! (内臓逆位)’

This was when the position of the intestines had its locations flipped, as compared to the normal man. It was a condition that was only found 1 in 10,000, so Um Seung Do didn't realize a side effect would occur.

Um Seung Do pushed away Jo Gi Chun, who was holding on to

Cho Ryu Hyang, and took hold of the boy. He then searched the insides of the boy with his inner power. Um Seung Do's face then twisted.

As he thought, Cho Ryu Hyang had reversed intestines.

All of his intestines were completely reversed.

‘Damn it.’

Um Seung Do swore in his mind. He knew the cause of this, but couldn't treat it. Um Seung Do's mind began to get chaotic.

“hnn....”

When a painful moan rose out of Cho Ryu Hyang's unconscious body, Um Seung Do came back to his senses.

‘Damn, he doesn't look like he practices martial arts.....’

Um Seung Do's face twisted.

Cho Ryu Hyang's condition was all too clear to him.

‘Zuo Huo Ru Mo (走火入魔)’

This happens when a martial artist takes too much damage while

training, and his insides become chaotic. But this wasn't caused by something like a physical injury, so it was even more dangerous.

‘What do I do?’

It wasn't like there was no way to fix it. There was a certain solution to this.

The problem was, it was extremely dangerous.

“Stop!”

When Um Seung Do shouted this, the carriage slowly came to a halt.

Before the carriage fully came to a stop, Um Seung Do said,

“Stay away from me for a moment.”

Um Seung Do left Jo Gi Chun inside the carriage, and carried Cho Ryu Hyang outside. Jo Gi Chun grabbed onto Um Seung Do's clothes, and asked a question.

“C, can you save him?”

“.....I'll try.”

Um Seung Do grit his teeth.

He couldn't tell the man that this was going to be an easy procedure.

He opened the carriage door.

The wind from outside came into the carriage.

Was it because of that?

Cho Ryu Hyang's body trembled, and a painful moan came out.

“hn....nnn.....”

“A, are you alright!? Wake up!”

Jo Gi Chun shook Cho Ryu Hyang with an urgent face, but the boy wouldn't wake up.

Um Seung Do shook his head, and said this.

“It's the Zuo Huo Ru Mo. I'll try to fix the boy, so hold on.”

Jo Gi Chun looked at Um Seung Do with a furious expression.

“Was this caused by that medicine?”

“.....Yes, but I didn’t expect this either. To think that the boy had reversed intestines.....”

Um Seung Do couldn’t say anything else.

That was because Jo Gi Chun’s face was turning red in anger.

Um Seung Do really couldn’t say anything at this situation.

But he did feel a little wronged. He didn’t realize anything like this, either.

“.....I’ll take the insults after this.”

“.....”

Jo Gi Chun was looking at Um Seung Do with a furious face.

Um Seung Do went outside, ignoring Jo Gi Chun’s gaze.

He put down a carpet from the carriage, and lay down Cho Ryu Hyang on it.

‘Damn.....’

He didn't expect anything like this to happen.

Um Seung Do didn't say this to Jo Gi Chun, but Um Seung Do was also putting his life at stake here. He sat Cho Ryu hyang down, and bit his lips.

‘Alright. Let's see who dies first here.’

Um Seung Do began to take out his inner power.

Right then, Cho Ryu Hyang was still conscious.

No, he was actually observing the area with a clearer mind than usual. He could obviously make out the conversation between the two men, thanks to that.

‘Reversed intestines? Me?’

Cho Ryu Hyang was surprised. He didn't know about it either. So he half believed what Um Seung Do said a little while ago. He thought the man just said it for the show.

Then.

[That guy's right, you idiot.]

Cho Ryu Hyang's eyes widened when he heard this voice.

No, his eyes would've widened if he could move his body.

[Remember how you opened the Mystical Door (奇門) a while back?]

Open the Mystical Door?

Cho Ryu Hyang remembered what happened during activating the formation, and nodded. Yes, he did feel something strange inside him when he completed the formation.

[Usually, you'd have to go through one more thing before you open the Mystical Door. I thought it was strange for you to open the door without going through that. To think your body was like this.....]

Were his intestines really reversed, like Um Seung Do said? When Cho Ryu Hyang was trying to take this in, he heard the voice again.

[You earned too much, too suddenly. Because of that, the balance of your body has crumbled. There was a need for the intestines to reverse, because of that. Well, it happened at a strange time, it seems.]

He could feel a tinge of playfulness in the old man's voice. This was a bad omen. He felt that the treatment would not be simple.

His expectations were correct.

[Your instincts have gotten better. You're right. The treatment you're about to go through will be quite painful. You'd usually die in a fit of pain when going through it.]

Cho Ryu Hyang's face twisted.

Come to think of it, the old man had the tendency to speak as if he didn't really care about other people's well being.

[Try to endure it. If you survive....]

.....If he survives?

The old man hesitated for a while, and spoke again.

[.....You'll earn quite a lot in return.]

What would that be?

before he could even ask that, a hot energy transferred to him from his back. Cho Ryu Hyang was surprised by this extreme heat. At the same time, he could hear Um Seung Do speaking in his head.

[I know you're still conscious.]

What was he about to say?

When Cho Ryu Hyang tried to listen, Um Seung Do spoke again.

[I'll use all my energy for this treatment. Usually, this treatment ends up in the patient's body expanding and exploding from excess energy.]

Cho Ryu Hyang carefully listened under the heat. There wasn't much choice for him, other than to listen to the man who was treating him.

[I'll try to control my output, but I'm not very confident I'll do well.]

‘This irresponsible.....’

Cho Ryu Hyang felt like spitting out insults.

[Please try to endure this as much as possible. Don't get unconscious. That would mean certain death.]

The moment the sentence finished, an astronomical amount of energy came into Cho Ryu Hyang.

At the same time, his body expanded twice in size.

Chapter 14. My Name Is Neng Ha Young!

Crack–

With the sound of the bones twisting about, Cho Ryu Hyang's body expanded hugely. Cho Ryu Hyang felt like his skin was going to burst. He tried to concentrate on not getting unconscious amidst all this pain. That was because he felt that if he went unconscious here, he'd most certainly die.

‘Arrgh.’

This kind of a pain could only be felt in hell.

While Cho Ryu Hyang struggled with pain, Um Seung Do was in a trouble of his own.

‘Damn it.’

Um Seung Do was letting out a stream of swears at the moment.

He was pouring in his energy into the boy as much as he could, but the energy seemed like it was flowing out or something. His inner energy kept going into the boy without limit. The boy was consuming his energy like a monster.

‘Darn.....’

Um Seung Do's body started to run out of energy. His neck went stiff, and his sight started to blur.

‘This is bad.’

At the same time he realized this, the vein of energy that connected his power with the boy's rapidly started to thin out. Um Seung Do grit his teeth. His heart ached.

If he stopped outputting energy now, the boy might die. Even Buddha would be unable to save the boy if he stopped here.

Um Seung Do had to make a choice.

But there was only one option available.

He couldn't back down.

‘Damn it, let's see this to the end.’

Um Seung Do slightly decreased the speed he gave away his energy, all the while swearing quite a bit in his head.

He caught his breath, and switched to a completely new treatment method on the boy. Then, the energy inside Cho Ryu Hyang went through a critical change.

But it seemed like Um Seung Do was in more stress than before.

Right now, not only was he using his inner power, but he was also using his Source energy, which was never to be used, especially if that person was a martial artist.

Kukwakwakwa—

Um Seung Do's inner energy was being sapped away like a waterfall. Even his clothes were starting to feel heavy. His mouth started to go dry.

Right then.

Click—

His inner energy stopped flowing, as if something clogged it.



Um Seung Do stopped his inner energy flow with a confused face.

He then took his hands off Cho Ryu Hyang's back.

‘Huh?’

The moment he took off his hands, he fell backwards.

‘Did I succeed?’

He couldn't even move his fingers.

But he still had to see the result of his work.

When he lifted his head, he could barely make out Cho Ryu Hyang, whose size have come back to its original size. He could also see that the boy's body was expanding and contracting a little, as if the body itself was breathing.

Looking at that, Um Seung Do smiled.

He then collapsed.

“Are you alright?”

Um Seung Do stared at Jo Gi Chun with a dumb face.

He blinked a bit, and stood back up.

“How long have I been out?”

“About 10 days.”

Um Seung Do's face went pale, he immediately started to look around himself.

He was in the carriage.

“Wh, where am I?”

Jo Gi Chun smiled.

He knew what the man was worried about.

“Where do you think we are?”

Um Seung Do spoke with a miserable face.

“We haven’t gone very far, have we?”

Jo Gi Chun shook his head.

“We will be at Port Wuling soon.”

“What?”

Um Seung Do asked a question after blinking a few times.

“We went past Castle Shaanxi?”

“Yes.”

After taking off at Castle Shanxi, they were nearing their destination, Castle Gansu. They went past two castles in only two days. It was an amazing speed. Um Seung Do spaced out for a moment, then recovered shortly after to message the driver.

[Who are you, at the driver's seat?]

[Sir, we would sacrifice our lives for you.]

[I owe you quite a bit. You've worked hard.]

[This is nothing. This one just followed the orders you gave out.]

Um Seung Do nodded.

It was good that he planned everything out before he got unconscious.

Thankfully, it didn't seem like anything bad happened.

[Thank you. I won't forget this.]

[This one just followed orders.]

While Um Seung Do was feeling relief at the driver's words, Cho Ryu Hyang spoke up to him.

“How’s your body?”

Um Seung Do’s face hardened.

Come to think of it, he didn’t check up on his body yet.

‘How much did I lose?’

Um Seung Do checked his inner power with a nervous face.

What he found surprised him.

‘My power increased?’

Just what was going on?

Why did his internal power increase, when he even used the Source energy?

After contemplating quite a bit on what happened, Um Seung Do nodded. His Source energy ran out quite a bit, but since he did manage to surpass his limits, his Dantian’s size expanded.

‘This feels quite strange.’

While Um Seung Do had a dumb expression on his face, the carriage’s speed started to decrease.

[Sir, there's a problem up ahead.]

[What problem?]

[It's..... I think you'll have to see for yourself.]

Um Seung Do's face wrinkled.

The carriage slowly came to a halt.

Jo Gi Chun and Cho Ryu Hyang tried to open the door when the carriage stopped, out of habit.

There was a new sight every time they went out, and then they would immediately take off to another destination. But it seemed this wasn't the case this time.

“Please, wait here for a moment.”

Um Seung Do stopped the two from what they were doing, and opened the door himself.

Was there a major problem outside?

Cho Ryu Hyang's thoughts were interrupted by the body of water that he could spot through the crack in the door.

A giant river.

He could see the yellow river, which ran across China.

Near the docks, which was located not far away, were a group of people.

“Sir!”

A few people near the boats ran to Um Seung Do.

He received a message from one of them at the same time.

[They're not easy. We didn't think we could decide the outcome of the fight, so we were waiting for you to come.]

Um Seung Do's face twisted at the message. This plan to deliver an old man was getting harder than expected. The people he posted at each checkpoint all held considerable power. But for them to not be able to fight, the people who came here probably weren't normal. Um Seung Do glared at the five newcomers that came here.

“What do you want here?”

“Are you the owner of this boat?”

A young man with cold eyes stepped up.

He seemed like he just entered his thirties.

Um Seung Do sized up his opponent.

‘This guy....’

He was an expert.

A peak expert, at that.

Um Seung Do was a bit shocked at this.

‘This is a face I haven’t seen before.’

The problem was, he didn’t know this expert.

There were only about 500 experts who reached the peak so far. Their information were all stored away in Um Seung Do’s brain. This just went to show how much power the church had when it came to information gathering.

Then, a person he saw for the first time in his life, emerged as a peak expert.

A big hole appeared in his information archives for the first time.

“I own this ship, yes. Who are you?”

The man shook his head.

“I cannot tell you who I am. Please understand. I’ll say what I came here for. We need that ship. We tried to negotiate with the people for half a day now, which was frustrating us at this point.”

Um Seung Do tilted his head.

“You need this ship?”

“Yes. Please let us borrow it. No, we’ll just buy it. With the crew.”

When the man took out money, Um Seung Do quickly refused it.

“It’s fine. I’m not planning on selling the ship.”

The man spoke.

“I’ll pay 3 times the original price.”

The man had a voice that implied, “are you still not going to sell it?” At that, Um Seung Do just smirked.

“I’m not planning on selling it, even with 10 times the original price.”

The man’s face stiffened.

He thought Um Seung Do was mocking him.

After reading his face, Um Seung Do quickly denied it.

“I’m not mocking you, please don’t misunderstand.”

Um Seung Do backed down here, since he didn’t really want to fight.

At that, the man’s face softened a bit.

“We have an urgent matter to attend to. We need that ship.”

“We also need the ship because of an urgent matter. I’m sorry, but you’ll have to find a different ship.”

Um Seung Do kindly declined again.

He was actually being really polite right now, unlike his usual self.

The man in front kept pushing Um Seung Do, as if he didn't know any of that.

"I already tried searching everywhere. This is the only ship nearby. So please, let us use this ship."

"Sorry, but we do need this ship quite badly."

The faces of the people on the other side started to turn bad.

It seemed like they, too, were being quite patient.

'So what?'

Um Seung Do suppressed his anger, and put on a calm face. He couldn't hand over the ship, no matter how desperate these people were. He had a mission he had to carry out, after all.

The man realized that Um Seung Do wasn't a normal person, seeing that he was able to take on the murderous aura that came from his side.

'He's an expert.'

This seemingly normal man here was an expert in disguise.

An expert the young man couldn't possibly estimate the power

of.

The man here was probably quite stronger than the young man.

The young man's face turned serious.

Right then, a young girl came out from the group of men. The young man's face turned pale.

“Ma’am.”

“It’s ok. I’ll take it from here.”

The girl here was wearing a bamboo hat (竹笠) that covered the whole of her face. Um Seung Do’s face turned to that of surprise when he saw her.

‘It’s a girl?’

She was a young one, at that.

A company of martial artists accompanying a young girl..... Um Seung Do was trying to find out who this girl was, by flipping through his mental archives. The girl spoke.

“We’ve been rude to a great expert like you. We apologize.”

“.....There’s nothing to be sorry about, is there?”

When Um Seung Do pretended that there was nothing to worry about, the girl adjusted her bamboo hat and spoke teasingly.

“Are you from the Heavenly Demon Church, by any chance?”

Um Seung Do’s face, which seemed emotionless just a moment ago, went through a big change.

He was surprised by the girl saying the name of the church.

“The Heavenly Demon Church!”

The people who guarded the young girl were also surprised.

They quickly formed a wall around the girl, and looked at Um Seung Do with hostile eyes.

The men looked like they would move in to kill Um Seung Do if he even twitched.

“.....I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

Um Seung Do tried to shake it off by putting on a poker face.

But he was a little late. His timing was slightly off, it seemed.

The girl wasn't falling for it.

“As I thought.”

“.....”

Um Seung Do started thinking quietly.

Should he just kill everyone and leave?

He could do it. But there was something that bothered him a little.

[Should we take care of them?]

It seemed that his underlings were thinking the same thing, but when Um Seung Do heard it, he immediately shook his head. This wasn't the place to do such things. They were out in the open, and someone could easily see them when they fought.

If this was the property of the Heavenly Demon Church, Um Seung Do would've taken care of them without second thought. But this wasn't the property of the Heavenly Demon Church. Things would get annoying if he got into an accident. While he was thinking about such things, the girl spoke again.

“You're going to the Qilian mountains, right? We can go there

together.”

Um Seung Do stared at the girl with narrow eyes.

He didn't know who this girl was, but he didn't even care anymore. The smile on his face slowly disappeared.

“I guess I have no choice, after all.”

After sorting out his thoughts, he started exuding a fierce aura with a cold face.

He didn't know who this person was, but she said things that shouldn't have been said.

She knew what was going on with the church in the mountains, but still talked about it in front of him? He had to kill her now.

“You said something you shouldn't have said. If you have any last words, say them here.”

When he made up his mind to kill someone, a fierce aura started coming out of Um Seung Do. He didn't want to kill anyone for the sake of the guest inside the carriage. But he had no choice this time. When Um Seung Do fingered his sword hilt, the girl removed her bamboo hat.

Her face was exposed to him.

‘Hak.....’

She seemed to be near 16.

She was a girl that was sure to be a beautiful lady in the future. And her face was one that was inside Um Seung Do’s mental archives.

“My name is Neng Ha Young. Pleased you meet you.”

Um Seung Do’s face twisted badly.

He took his hands off the sword hilt.

He knew that this was a person that would be troublesome to kill.

Chapter 15. The Secret Conversation Between Cho Ryu Hyang And Neng Ha Young

“Some things happened, so we’ll have to take the boat with the folks over there. Is that alright?”

Jo Gi Chun tilted his head.

“We don’t really have problems, is there supposed to be one?”

Um Seung Do scratched his head.

He didn’t expect much, but if the man even hesitated a little, he was about to persuade him make him agree.

It didn’t have to be done, it seemed.

“It shouldn’t be a problem, but it might get a little uncomfortable. I was asking you about that.”

“Alright.”

He received permission from Jo Gi Chun quite easily. Um Seung Do came back out of the carriage, and walked up to Neng Ha Young.

“I received permission from our guests.”

“Thank you. That’s a relief.”

“Please, get on the boat.”

“Alright, thank you.”

Um Seung Do nodded, and ordered his underlings to remove any traces of them being here. He then walked to the carriage.

“Get on the boat, please.”

“Of course.”

Jo Gi Chun and Cho Ryu Hyang boarded the boat. Seeing how this was a medium-sized ship, the interior was huge. There were 5 cabins and a kitchen.

Cho Ryu Hyang felt that someone was watching him, while he was touring the boat. When he turned his head, his eyes met with Neng Ha Young’s. The girl whose red hair was flowing in the wind.

This was the first meeting between Cho Ryu Hyang, who was to be called King Shura (修羅王) in the far future, and Neng Ha Young, who would be known as Hidden Fox (隱香狐狸). Their impressions of each other were quite interesting.

‘So that girl is the granddaughter of the Night Emperor...’

He heard this from Um Seung Do, before he boarded the boat.

Cho Ryu Hyang observed the girl carefully, after fixing his glasses.

The three sovereigns were very powerful. To think that she was a granddaughter of one of them..... Of course he would be focused on her. Cho Ryu Hyang was interested about it. So he started using the Faultless view without realizing it on the girl.

At the same time, Neng Ha Young was observing Cho Ryu Hyang with a different thought.

‘He’s wearing glasses.’

At the time, glasses were extremely expensive, and therefore couldn’t be worn by many. Who was that boy that possessed this object? What’s his relation with the Heavenly Demon Church? her curiosity sparked when she saw the boy.

If he was traveling as a guest to the Qilian mountains, he should be related to the church in one way or the other. But the boy didn’t look like he practiced martial arts. Even so, Um Seung Do was treating that boy and his teacher with utmost respect. That’s why Neng Ha Young became curious and a little confused.

‘Why are they taking this boy to the Qilian mountains?’

The master of this boat was obviously a peak expert. To think that a mere boy would be guarded by an expert of this caliber. There was sure to be something going on. Neng Ha Young quickly recounted all the information stocked in her head.

If you took a boat from Port Wuling, you could get to Castle Gansu straight away. If they then take a carriage from there for half a day, they would be able to get into the Qilian mountains. Obviously, their objective was to get to the mountains.

Neng Ha Young already knew that the church was doing something on the mountains. The whole martial world was in an uproar about it, after all. But the thing was, she didn't know what they were doing.

‘What’s the church trying to get at the mountains?’

Is there a need for the church to get into the territory of the Alliance to acquire something?

‘I don’t know what they’re trying to get, up I’m sure they have their reasons. Otherwise, the church wouldn’t try to do something this risky.’

Neng Ha Young started to think deeper.

How’s the boy related to all this? He should be related to all this somehow, even if it’s not a direct relation.

Right then, someone came up to her, and put a coat around her gently.

“Ma’am, it’s cold outside. Please come inside.”

Neng Ha Young woke from her deep thought when her bodyguard spoke to her.

“Is our guild also sending members to Qilian mountains?”

“Yes. Elder Sang Dong Ha (想董河) is personally leading the Hidden Moon Corps (隱月隊).”

Neng Ha Young’s eyes sparkled. Elder Sang Dong Ha was an expert. A harmonious expert, at that. He was the one known as the Chasing Blood Lord (追血君) in the Fifteen Guests.

“That’s good.”

Neng Ha Young smiled.

There was something suspicious about the Heavenly Demon Church. The lack of information didn’t let them find out what exactly the church was doing, but something is bound to come out if they investigate enough.

There would, of course, be danger that follow, but he would take

care of that. Elder Sang Dong Ha was the leader of the elders that harassed Neng Ha Young's father. Neng Ha Young hoped that something bad would happen to the elder because of this event.

“Is there something wrong?”

“No, I was talking to myself.”

Neng Ha Young looked at Cho Ryu Hyang for a little while longer, and went inside.

Jo Gi Chun smiled at his disciple, who was thinking about something on the deck.

He thought that his disciple was taken by that girl.

“She's a pretty fellow.”

Cho Ryu Hyang stared at Jo Gi Chun with a confused expression.

Jo Gi Chun didn't know that Cho Ryu Hyang was thinking about something else at the moment. Cho Ryu Hyang's head was full of surprise at the moment.

‘79.....’

The girl showed him the biggest number so far, when Cho Ryu

Hyang used his vision. This came at Cho Ryu Hyang quite heavily.

While Cho Ryu Hyang was spacing out because of this fact, Jo Gi Chun took something out from his pocket and opened his mouth.

“Can you see this for a moment?”

Cho Ryu Hyang took the paper his teacher gave him. On it, there were countless numbers arranged in a strange format.

“This is.....”

Cho Ryu Hyang stared at the paper.

He was pleasantly surprised by what he found on it.

“This is a language.”

Jo Gi Chun smiled, and nodded.

“Yes. We wouldn’t be able to talk in public as long as we’re here, so this would be a sort of a code between us.”

Only Jo Gi Chun and Cho Ryu Hyang would be able to understand the meaning of these numbers.

While they were moving in the carriage, Jo Gi Chun was

constantly thinking. To be truthful, he still couldn't trust these people from the Heavenly Demon Church.

But the things that he wanted to talk about with his disciple kept increasing. For example, he wanted to talk about how the boy was able to activate the formation, how he was able to use the Disintegration steps, and etc. He had much to ask, and much to teach. But there wasn't a way to teach him privately.

So after much consideration, he came up with this. Thankfully, his disciple understood its purpose immediately. This made Jo Gi Chun immensely happy.

There weren't many that recognized the results that he came up with math. But his disciple recognized it. He felt quite proud thanks to that.

"I couldn't ask teacher much because there were so many people watching us, either."

"You can use this method in the future."

Cho Ryu Hyang was pleasantly surprised by this, and Jo Gi Chun was equally proud of his disciple for recognizing this instantly.

And that way, the two created a language only those two could understand.

‘This is suspicious.’

He knew that the two people were holed up in the passenger’s cabin.

When Um Seung Do tried to see what the two were doing at first, he backed off in fright.

‘Psychos.’

The two people were exchanging papers full of numbers with each other, and were constantly solving something.

The disciple was being constantly being surprised by something, and wrote something in response. The teacher was taking that paper, and was reading it with a proud face.

‘They’re a different race altogether.’

Um Seung Do simply went to sleep, not even daring to approach the two people.

He was supposed to use the private cabin, but because of the unexpected guests, he had to share the room with Jo Gi Chun.

He knew Cho Ryu Hyang and Um Seung Do were quite discomforted by him, but it was the same for him, too. Having to

stay with people he doesn't trust was just torture. And he had to satisfy their needs, to boot.

While Um Seung Do was trying to make himself sleep.

Jo Gi Chun and Cho Ryu Hyang were carefully studying formations. Of course, the conversation was held in their own language.

[Formations are very sensitive fellows. With even a little mistake, a formation wouldn't activate. If you think of it in human terms, a formation would be a very picky person. That's why we can't make any mistakes with formations.]

Jo Gi Chun paused for a moment after that, and wrote something else.

[But the way you use is fundamentally different from other techniques. You could call it a "cheat", even. That's why it would be better for you to hide it from others for now.]

A normal formation would use a gem containing the power of the heavens and the earth as a nucleus. Using that, the formation would naturally gain energy from its surroundings to open the Mystical Door and create a new dimension.

But when Cho Ryu Hyang created his formation, none of this happened. There was no real way of knowing how the boy came across this method, but the boy would open the Mystical Door

first, and then place the nucleus. The process was completely different from normal formation creation methods.

This was quite an amazing achievement.

[Was it called the 'Faultless View of The World'?]

[Yes.]

[You'll have to thank that elder who disappeared after giving you this power. You gained the luck of the heavens.]

Cho Ryu Hyang nodded.

He was thinking the same thing.

The fact that he hid the fact that the old man was still there in his mind unsettled him for a bit. The old man told him to do so, but it did make Cho Ryu Hyang feel a little bad.

[Your method is quite amazing, but it would be good to learn the traditional method, too. You'll learn something new when you try implementing some techniques from the traditional method.]

Cho Ryu Hyang nodded.

The method was different, but they were essentially the same

thing.

Like that, the two both studied formations the whole day in the cabin.

‘I’m tired.’

Cho Ryu Hyang came out to the deck, rubbing his eyes. Seeing the sun rising from the horizon, he assumed that it was dawn. His teacher was sleeping, as well as Um Seung Do. Cho Ryu Hyang, too, was lying down, exhausted, but strangely, he couldn’t sleep.

Standing on the edge of the ship, he welcomed the cold wind that blasted his body. His stress seemed to dissolve a little that way. He took off his glasses, and leaned on the side of the ship. He then closed his eyes.

Learning about formations from teacher was quite entertaining. It was fun approaching the world he didn’t know about, and he was overjoyed that he could focus learning math this way. No matter what others said, Cho Ryu Hyang liked math. He thanked the heavens for giving him this talent.

While Cho Ryu Hyang took in the wind, someone approached him from behind.

“Why are you out already? The wind is still cold.”

Cho Ryu Hyang came back to his senses, and opened his eyes.

It was her.

The girl known as the granddaughter of the Night Emperor, Neng Ha Young.

“Did I interrupt your private time by any chance?”

Cho Ryu Hyang took out his glasses from his pockets, and spoke with an impassive voice.

“A little.”

Neng Ha Young, hearing that, smiled.

“You’re still young.”

Cho Ryu Hyang wrinkled his eyebrows. Her statement was true, but it was too sudden.

Neng Ha Young stood next to Cho Ryu Hyang, and talked.

“When a pretty girl like me says that, you should just say no.”

“Why?”

“That’s what adults do.”

Cho Ryu Hyang was confused.

“Adults are hard to understand.”

“Of course. It’s very hard.”

Cho Ryu Hyang looked at Neng Ha Young, whose face was tinted red thanks to the rising sun.

Neng Ha Young, too, was staring at Cho Ryu Hyang.

“Ask.”

When Cho Ryu Hyang said this, Neng Ha Young’s eyes widened in surprise.

“How’d you know?”

Cho Ryu Hyang smiled.

“You have a curious look on your face. It would be strange if you didn’t ask me anything.”

Neng Ha Young nodded.

And talked.

“Big sis was actually looking for a chance to talk to you. I kept trying to find a chance. I even stayed awake till now.....”

Big sis?

Cho Ryu Hyang felt a little annoyed for some reason when he heard that, but he decided to let it pass.

“I knew it.”

“How?”

Cho Ryu Hyang opened his mouth as he fixed his glasses.

“Unless someone waits purposefully, it’s very rare for a coincidence like this to happen. The probability is very low.”

Neng Ha Young grinned.

“So you knew this wasn’t a coincident from a start? Big sis wanted to approach you as naturally as possible.”

“That kind of a coincidence isn’t too common.”

“I like you. You’re honest.”

Cho Ryu Hyang didn’t hate the girl who approached him for some reason.

So he opened his mouth with a lax look on his face.

“What do you want to know?”

“Who you are, and what the church is trying to do.”

Cho Ryu Hyang stared at the girl without a word. Neng Ha Young didn’t try to avoid the gaze. It seemed that this girl’s personality was rather straightforward. But he didn’t expect her to ask just like that.

“What? Ah, is this question a little too troublesome?”

“No.”

“Then what?”

Why’d he hesitate?

After thinking a bit, Cho Ryu Hyang realized his reason for doing

so, and smiled.

“Nothing’s free, you know.”

It’s equivalent exchange.

If you gave someone something, you earned something in exchange.

That was what a trade essentially was.

Neng Ha Young nodded when she heard that.

It was true.

There’s nothing free in the world.

When she thought that, she immediately wrinkled her face, as if she thought up something else.

“It’s not free, even if a pretty girl like big sis is asking?”

“.....”

Cho Ryu Hyang had a startled look on his face.

“What’s all this have to do with you having to be pretty?”

“Oh? So you’re admitting that big sis is pretty?”

When Neng Ha Young laughed happily and teasingly asked Cho Ryu Hyang this, Cho Ryu Hyang began to observe Neng Ha Young in detail. After examining her as if he was grading a cow, he nodded.

“You are indeed pretty. But this has nothing to do with trade.”

Neng Ha Young sighed.

“That’s why you’re still young.”

Again, it’s that age talk.

Cho Ryu Hyang talked as he adjusted his glasses.

“Yeah, I’m young. So no freebies.”

This wasn’t an easy opponent. She couldn’t get anything just by provoking him.

Neng Ha Young sighed again, and asked.

“You want money? Should big sis give you some?”

“Looks like you have quite a bit of money.”

“Of course. I have a lot of it.”

Cho Ryu Hyang smirked at Neng Ha Young’s response.

“But this isn’t something that can be earned with money. You know that, right?”

He knew who the girl was, and he also knew the value of the information she was asking for. He should then gain something that has an equivalent value to this information, but he had no intention of giving anything away just for money.

Neng Ha Young put on a regretful smile.

“You’re quite smart, huh? You know what trading is, even at this age.”

“I studied hard to be smart, you know.”

Neng Ha Young chuckled when she heard that. This kid was quite funny. She spoke.

“So, what do you want?”

Finally, the question he was waiting for. Cho Ryu Hyang adjusted his glasses. He probably get some information regarding the martial world with this exchange.

“I want.....”

When Neng Ha Young heard what Cho Ryu Hyang had wanted, the composure on her face disappeared altogether.

Cho Ryu Hyang actually wanted something that even she didn't expect.



Chapter 16. Cho Ryu Hyang's Hide-And-Seek

‘These little things are playing around, huh.’

The man hidden in the shadows.

Um Seung Do smirked when he listened in on the conversation between the two children.

Cho Ryu Hyang thought that Um Seung Do was sleeping, but that wasn't it at all. Um Seung Do was a peak expert.

He managed to pick out Cho Ryu Hyang trying to sneak out, and followed the boy.

When he tried to leave quietly, seeing that the boy was just resting outside, he noticed Neng Ha Young approaching from behind. That's why he was hiding here, looking at the two.

He was looking at the two children trying to look like a pair of adults, since it was quite cute to him. But then, all of a sudden, the two began to talk about the secrets the church had.



‘Should I teach a lesson to these kids now?’

Um Seung Do thought carefully.

He could do exactly that to Cho Ryu Hyang, but for Neng Ha Young, acting violently towards her was quite dangerous.

Her background was the problem.

Then what should he do?

While Um Seung Do was thinking about such things, the conversation between the two children kept progressing.

“I had something that I was curious about in the martial world for quite a while now.”

“What is it? If this big sis knows it, I’ll tell you all about it.”

Before Cho Ryu Hyang could even open his mouth, Um Seung Do intervened.

[Don’t try anything dangerous like that. The main church isn’t as easy to take on as you might think.]

Cho Ryu Hyang froze when he heard Um Seung Do’s voice.

His face ashened as if he was a little prankster who just got caught by his parents. His back was full of sweat.

‘He was awake?’

He forgot about the fact that he was in the same boat as one of the members in the Heavenly Demon Church.

The organization strong enough to turn the martial world into a sea of blood. It would not be wise to talk about their secrets when on the same boat as them.

After thinking that, Cho Ryu Hyang closed his mouth.

“What is it?”

“.....I almost made a mistake.”

Cho Ryu Hyang smiled bitterly.

When he thought about Um Seung Do listening to them from somewhere, he shivered.

‘He was listening from the start?’

He felt a little annoyed when he felt that he was being watched.

When Neng Ha Young saw Cho Ryu Hyang’s annoyed expression, she quickly responded.

“There’s..... someone here?”

“.....”

Neng Ha Young began to observe her surroundings.

‘There’s nothing nearby.’

Cho Ryu Hyang, who didn't even know martial arts, noticed something when she didn't?

Neng Ha Young wrinkled her eyebrows, and extended her senses as far as she could. But trying to find Um Seung Do with her level of skill was near impossible.

“Come out.”

Um Seung Do didn't have any intention of doing so.

‘You think I'm crazy? Why'd I come out?’

He'd only look bad when he came out after looking at two kids.

Even though he revealed his presence to Cho Ryu Hyang, he wasn't keen on doing the same thing to Neng Ha Young.

Thinking that, Um Seung Do didn't reveal his presence.

He concealed it even more.

He brought out his technique to his limit.

‘He's not even considering revealing himself, huh?’

Cho Ryu Hyang got a little annoyed when Um Seung Do didn't

reveal himself even after a long time.

He was originally going to let it pass, since this whole thing was his fault, after all.

But to think that the man would just stay hidden, when his existence was already exposed. Was he not mocking them? When Cho Ryu Hyang thought that, he felt quite annoyed.

He didn't want to leave the man be.

He wanted to do something to the man.

'Is there a way.....'

At this point, this was a matter of pride.

After thinking something for a while, Cho Ryu Hyang caught his breath.

Didn't he have a secret weapon, something that other people didn't have?

He didn't know if it would work in this situation, but it was worth trying.

"You're looking down on me, aren't you?"

When Neng Ha Young, who still couldn't detect Um Seung Do's presence, bit her lower lip in annoyance, Cho Ryu Hyang came up to her.

“Wait here.”

“Why?”

“Just watch.”

“What are you going to do?”

Cho Ryu Hyang began walking without replying.

He caught his breath.

The Faultless View of The World.

He used that.

Um Seung Do was currently hidden in the darkness, and was smirking at the children.

‘You wouldn't ever be able to find me.’

It was quite amusing to see two children do this.

Seeing them get angry, and seeing them trying to find him was funny.

But that's where that all ends.

His stealth technique is on the peak. Even in the Heavenly Demon Church, there aren't many that can see through his stealth technique.

In front of Um Seung Do, the attempts the children made to look for him just seemed like child's play.

In short, it was pointless. Um Seung Do thought that he was playing a hide-and-seek game where he definitely couldn't lose.

But then.....

‘Ah?’

Um Seung Do tilted his head a bit.

That was because Cho Ryu Hyang began to walk right towards him.

‘Probably a coincidence.’

His technique was good enough to let him go unnoticed right in front of others.

But.....

Grab.

“You’re going a little too far.”

“.....”

Um Seung Do stared down at Cho Ryu Hyang with a dumb face.

He didn’t even get cautious when the boy came up right next to him. A competition with a child who didn’t even know martial arts seemed ridiculous, after all.

But this arrogant child came right up to him and grabbed onto him.

How?

Cho Ryu Hyang looked at the man’s face, and then nodded.

He thought that since he, too, mocked the man, they were even.

Right then.

Crack–

Cho Ryu Hyang couldn't breath anymore.

Um Seung Do grabbed onto Cho Ryu Hyang's collars, and held the boy up in the air.

Um Sung Do did this so fast, that Cho Ryu Hyang's top clothing was actually about to be ripped off.

“You....., what are you?”

Right now, Um Seung Do's face resembled that of a demon's.

Not only did he have a face of an adult who got angry over a game with a child, he was also using violence.

“Talk, kid. Or you die.”

The polite man that Um Seung Do was before was gone.

A martial artist's pride. That pride of his was injured, and therefore his animal instinct clawed outside. In his hands, Cho Ryu Hyang was nothing but a helpless child.

While Cho Ryu Hyang was trying to breath.

“You should stop here. He’s going to die.”

Neng Ha Young came up to the man, and glared at him.

She couldn’t think at all before because she was astonished that Cho Ryu Hyang managed to find Um Seung Do. But when Um Seung Do grabbed onto the boy’s collars, Neng Ha Young came back to her senses.

“Don’t interfere, girl. Unless you want to die.”

“I can’t do that.”

When she stomped the ground after finishing her sentence, 4 men appeared right beside her, like a ghost. They were the bodyguards that came with Neng Ha Young.

“Ma’am.”

Um Seung Do ground his teeth.

He then growled like a ferocious beast.

“You think I can’t kill you all?”

Neng Ha Young smiled in front of Um Seung Do's murderous gaze.

It was a smile that she tried to make as relaxed as possible.

“Can you?”

Um Seung Do smiled.

It was a very unsettling smile, which almost started to show his gums.

Neng Ha Young thought that this was extremely frightening, but she didn't try to look it.

If she got pushed back here, something bad would happen.

That was the Martial World that Neng Ha Young knew about.

“Of course.”

He'll kill them.

He was going to kill them all.

His murderous intent reached the peak, after all.

His injured pride made him forget everything else, and made him go berserk.

Neng Ha Young saw this, and just shrugged.

“You’re actually going to kill us.”

“Yeah.”

“You’ll feed our bodies to the fish, I assume?”

“The fishes are going to have a rare feast.”

This was the middle of the river. There was nowhere to run, and even if they could, Um Seung Do was confident that he could kill them all. Plus, it was easy to get rid of the corpses.

When Um Seung Do thought all this, Neng Ha Young spoke up.

“You’re assuming that I boarded the boat of the Heavenly Demon Church without any preparation, aren’t you? Do you really look like an idiot to you? You think I didn’t contact the guild when I boarded?”

“.....”

Um Seung Do's face went stiff.

He forgot about something because of his emotions going out of control.

The girl wasn't just famous in the Martial World for being the grandchild of one of the three sovereigns.

'Damn it.'

Her cleverness was already quite famous.

The information that the church's spies in the guild brought in about the girl was quite amazing.

When he thought about all this, the murderous aura around him weakened considerably.

it was easy to kill the girl now.

But having to deal with the guild after that was troublesome.

There would be an interrogation from the church to find out why Um Seung Do caused this, and he didn't want that to happen.

"You thought well."

Neng Ha Young sighed in relief in her mind.

It seemed her threats worked, thankfully.

She glanced at Cho Ryu Hyang, who had fainted not long ago, and spoke.

“You should let go. He doesn’t look like he can talk, anyways.”

Um Seung Do stared at the boy in his hands.

His eyes started to get complicated.

Cho Ryu Hyang woke up after a quarter of the day passed.

When he opened his eyes, he could see his teacher, who seemed full of worry, with Um Seung Do at the side, who had a stiff face on him.

“Are you awake?”

“.....Yes.”

“You’re not hurt anywhere?”

“Yes, I’m alright.”

Cho Ryu Hyang looked at Um Seung Do as he said this.

The terrifying aura he felt from the man right before he fainted.

‘Martial artist.....’

He forgot that the man was a martial artist.

When he thought back on what had happened, what he did just then was quite foolish.

Just because he got a little annoyed back then, he taunted a martial artist from the Heavenly Demon Church. This did indeed seem quite foolish.

When he thought that much, Cho Ryu Hyang shook his head.

‘No. I became like that only because I was weak.’

It wasn’t that this was all his fault. He was only like this because he was young and weak.

There was nothing wrong about what he did to the other side.

Didn’t the man actually provoke him first?

Not only did he listen in on the conversation between Cho Ryu Hyang and Neng Ha young, he even dared to provoke them by staying in the dark indefinitely.

This was something he wouldn't have had to gone through, especially if he had strength that equalled the other side's.

‘I need strength.’

This was the first event in his life that made Cho Ryu Hyang crave power.

“We'll be at Castle Gansu soon. We're almost there.”

It seemed that the teacher didn't know about this yet.

That was good. He didn't want to make his teacher worry.

Cho Ryu Hyang looked at Um Seung Do.

Um Seung Do, too, was looking at the boy at this time. The man had a complicated face.

Cho Ryu Hyang looked away soon after.

He, too, felt a bit complicated at the moment. He didn't know

how to greet the other side.

It was same for Um Seung Do, too.

‘Damn.’

It was better not to kill, when you couldn’t take care of it cleanly.

Um Seung Do knew this well, but he still tried to kill the boy right then.

His emotions were out of control there.

‘But how’d he find out?’

Um Seung Do’s skills were one of the finest in the church.

When the boy found him just like that back there, Um Seung Do went out of control for a moment.

‘This is suspicious. That boy is suspicious.’

Wrinkling the paper in his pocket, he started to think carefully.

The paper in his pocket contained the data on the boy’s physical stats.

He already read it countless times.

But no matter how many times he read it, he couldn't get the information he wanted.

‘The boy never learned martial arts? That's a lie.’

He couldn't believe it.

Even if the boy learned martial arts from a peak expert from the time he was in his mother's womb, he wouldn't be able to see through Um Seung Do's stealth technique.

And then it says that the boy never learned martial arts?

No, there was something in the records.

‘The Six Blade Technique and the Heavenly Power Technique.....’

This was the most basic technique a swordsman or a fighter would learn.

But with just that much skill, the boy managed to detect him.

‘There's something else other than the data we have on him.’

The boy was definitely hiding something.

But Um Seung Do didn't know what that was. That's what bothered him.

It wasn't the right time to ask, either. He was wondering if the boy would tell him anything, especially with what happened before.

'He's really getting on my nerves.'

While Um Seung Do was thinking about all this, Cho Ryu Hyang, too, was thinking about what was to happen in the future.

Then.

They could feel the ship slowing down. Um Seung Do stood up, and spoke.

"We're here. We've arrived at Castle Gansu."

"Really?"

Cho Ryu Hyang stood up.

He learned that he would need strength to protect himself, for

the first time in his life.

‘I’m not going to go through anything like that ever again.’

He’d need strength for that.

Then, what was strength?

How would he get it?

This event caused Cho Ryu Hyang to think carefully about strength.

These things that he would constantly think about would eventually set the base for his title in the future, King Shura.

Chapter 17. Cho Ryu Hyang Knows

The master of the Heavenly Demon Church, Gongson Chun Gi.

He looked at the muscular old man that came to him, and grinned.

“It’s been a while, Guardian Wu. Getting here was troublesome, right?”

The old man called [Guardian](#) Wu.

(TL: Dharmapala (Protector of the law) → Guardian)

His actual name was Wu Gyu Ho (右揆護).

He was one of the three experts in the harmonious stage in the church, and he was also one of the people that served Gongson Chun Gi ever since the pope was a young boy.

“I’m just happy to see you healthy.”

“I’m always healthy. Now, sit here.”

“Of course.”

Guardian Wu sat down on the seat Gongson Chun Gi offered him.

Gongson Chun Gi then took his teapot, and filled Guardian Wu's cup.

"I heard some things happened while you came here?"

"Thing.....s?"

"I know something happened. It's ok. Just say it."

"Ah, yeah, err....."

"You can say it."

"You mean.... You mean the Emei Sect's female monks."

"Yeah, what happened? I didn't really get what the other guys were telling me."

Guardian Wu anxiously gulped down the steaming tea, and spoke.

"The people over there were insulting the main church, so I kindly educated them, hoho."

"Educate them? Not go beat them to death?"

"Hak! What are you talking about....."

When Gongson Chun Gi said that, Guardian Wu widened his eyes and denied it quickly.

“I’m old now, so I don’t just go around killing people anymore, your holiness.”

Gongson Chun Gi glared at Guardian Wu.

When the old man avoided eye contact a little, Gongson Chun Gi opened his mouth.

“Hey, Gyum.”

[Yes, your holiness.]

“Is this old man telling the truth?”

Guardian Wu made a surprised face, then quickly glared at the area behind Gongson Chun Gi.

Lim Hak Gyum sweated a bit when he noticed the glare.

How could he just go on and say that it was a lie, just like that?

[.....Yes. For now....., he’s telling the truth.]

“Hoh? For now? So there’s something he’s not telling me. Oh, and you don’t have to just go and message me like that. In front of this old man, your stealth technique is just fool’s play.”

Guardian Wu was a harmonious expert.

In front of his senses, Lim Hak Gyum’s skills would just be petty tricks.

“Hak Gyum, you’ll have to speak carefully. For all of us.”

When Guardian Wu carefully said this, Lim Hak Gyum made a troubled face.

Wasn’t this a threat?

“Guardian Wu, what are you doing in front of me? Did you go dull or something?”

“O, of course not, your holiness. Uhahahaha.”

When Guardian Wu laughed anxiously and shrunk back a little, Lim Hak Gyum spoke up carefully.

“According to the reports this one got, Guardian Wu didn’t kill anyone, as he said before, but he did personally destroy the dantian of 80 female monks.”

“What? Eighty? He personally destroyed their dantian?”

“Yes.”

When Gongson Chun Gi looked at Guardian Wu with a face that said, “I knew it”, Guardian Wu lowered his head and whispered a few words.

“They were insulting the church, so.....”

“You destroyed their dantian just because of a little insult? A full grown adult like you shouldn’t do things like that. Trying being more kind. Because of things like this, the main church just gets insulted by everyone.”

“.....I’m sorry, your holiness.”

Gongson Chun Gi sighed at the old man’s response.

“Oh yeah, you brought everyone from the Blood Wolf Corps (血狼隊). Are you trying to fight the Alliance?”

Guardian Wu spoke with a determined face when he heard Gongson Chun Gi’s words.

“I brought them when I heard that a bunch of trash from the Alliance were trying to annoy us. If you just give the word....., I will present you the head of the Dao Emperor.”

One of the three sovereigns, the Dao Emperor.

Gongson Chun Gi chuckled when he heard the old man's words.

It might be possible.

The Blood Wolf Corps boasted the most power out of all the other corps, after all.

Everyone in the corps were all peak experts.

There were about five hundred of them here.

“You never change. I'm quite surprised.”

Gongson Chun Gi poured tea into his teacup, and spoke.

“The main church mustn't have blood on our hands any longer. This is just a repeat of the past events. It's an evil cycle.”

Gongson Chun Gi, unlike all the other popes in the past, belonged to the moderate faction in the church. This was a very revolutionary event, as something like this never happened in the church, where the blood and strength ruled over all.

‘I just don't understand.’

Guardian Wu just couldn't understand the pope's thoughts.

If you compared the military power the church possessed currently to the past, you would see that the church currently was at the peak of its power. Even though this was the case, Gongson Chun Gi still forbade the church from making any major moves in the Martial World.

“Your holiness, weren't they the ones that provoked us first? The main church simply retaliated a little strongly.”

Gongson Chun Gi nodded.

“Yeah. In most cases, they were the ones to provoke us first.”

“We need to really show the church's power this time. We need to massacre everyone that comes to the Qilian mountains, and go down to Sichuan to kill everyone in the Alliance.”

Gongson Chun Gi once again nodded at Guardian Wu's murderous words.

“That's not a bad option. But if we do that, the balance crumbles.”

“The balance?”

“Yeah. The balance between the church, the guild, and the alliance. If this perfect balance crumbles now, everyone would start fighting. If this happens, everyone would suffer quite badly.”

“We can only obtain something bigger if we make great sacrifices, no?”

“Something bigger?”

“Heavenly unification! The main church extending out into the mainland.”

Gongson Chun Gi stared at this excited old man for a while.

And then he spoke.

“It must be good for you, to still be so full of passion.”

“Isn’t the expansion to mainland an old desire of the church?”

“You want to see the people of the church be massacred? If we go out into the mainland, thousands will die. Perhaps even more.”

“The men of the church isn’t that weak, your holiness. I trained them to be stronger than any other in the Martial World.”

Gongson Chun Gi nodded.

“I have to agree with you on that. Most of them are too healthy. That’s what worries me more.”

Guardian Wu realized that this was a crucial chance.

He wanted to persuade the pope for them to expand into the mainland now.

“Aren’t the boys I brought here today the ones that you trained with great care? Didn’t we train them just for a situation like this?”

Why would the pope create the Blood Wolf Corps, especially if he wasn’t going to use them? Guardian Wu just couldn’t understand what was going on in the pope’s mind.

“A powerless justice is nothing but an empty voice. That’s why I brought them up. Well, like you said, I also trained them in case of an emergency.”

“Then what should we do when these people attack us? Shouldn’t we at least strike back?”

Gongson Chun Gi smiled playfully.

“Yeah, I’m worried about that, too. But after thinking for a long time, I reached a conclusion.”

“Just give the word. This one is already ready.”

The pope is definitely going to tell him to defend.

He didn't like this very much, but the pope's command was absolute.

‘He wouldn't tell me to just defend and not retaliate, right?’

Guardian Wu was thinking of taking care of all the experts in the Alliance if the chance came.

Then.

The pope issued a weird command.

“If they attack us, let's just run.”

“.....?”

Guardian Wu wasn't sure of what he just heard.

“Ehh.....”

“Our boys are fast, right?”

“.....”

Guardian Wu wasn't able to close his mouth.

He was sweating all over his forehead.

“R, really.....?”

“Have you ever seen me joke?”

Gulp.

It was true.

The pope seemed playful and lazy, but when it came to matters like this, he wasn't the type of person to throw a joke.

‘Just tell me it's a joke instead.....’

Running?

The strongest organization in history, the Heavenly Demon Church, just running from the enemy?

With the pope here, at that?

If this were to get out in the public.....

Guardian Wu seemed like he was about to cry.

“Unless they’re idiots, they wouldn’t attack the church carelessly. I’m just telling you to always think of the worst case situation, Guardian Wu.”

‘Is there anything worse than just running away?’

It seemed better to just get massacred.

Guardian Wu just sat there in a daze, listening to the rest of the pope’s orders.

Inside the moving carriage.

Cho Ryu Hyang was thinking about something.

‘Neng Ha Young, was it?’

What she told him before he got onto the carriage was still lingering in his mind.

[Here's an advice from big sis. You're in the Martial World right now. And here, strength is everything. I don't know how you just found that man, but without strength, it's just better to pretend you didn't see him. So be careful, Don't to anything that would shorten your lifespan.]

She was right.

His chest grew tight because of that.

“What are you thinking about?”

When his teacher asked him a question, Cho Ryu Hyang regained his senses.

“I was thinking about something else.”

“They say we'll be arriving soon. Aren't you excited?”

Teacher had an excited expression on his face.

As this was a face he didn't see often, Cho Ryu Hyang looked at his teacher with a curious face.

The most complicated formation under the heavens.

Was his teacher excited because of that?

But what his teacher said next was something Cho Ryu Hyang didn't expect to hear at all.

“They say we'll be meeting the pope of the Heavenly Demon Church right after we arrive.”

The pope of the Heavenly Demon Church?

Was this something to be this excited about?

“He's someone who never revealed himself to the public so far. Don't you want to see who he is?”

The pope of the Heavenly Demon Church was the [representation](#) of god.

(Messenger->representation (A little mistranslation there. Sorry -_-;))

In the Martial World, he was known as an amazing expert, and was the leader of the strongest organization.

It would be a lie to say that one wasn't excited, but was it really worth getting as excited as his teacher, who was usually extremely calm?

As if he read Cho Ryu Hyang's expression, Jo Gi Chun spoke.

“A religion holds immense power. Think about it. Even the king himself is reluctant of fighting because of the one person in control.”

It was true.

A situation where too much power was given to a single person.

That was what a religion was, and was what the Heavenly Demon church currently was.

“Did you take a look at Um Seung Do driving the cart?”

“What?”

What does that mean?

When Cho Ryu Hyang made a confused face, Jo Gi Chun began whispering.

“He’s probably an extremely strong expert. Someone stronger than we might think.”

The fact that Um Seung Do was an amazing expert.

Cho Ryu Hyang knew that best.

“An expert of this caliber is working as a carriage driver. And he has to do our biddings at that. This isn’t something we can just ignore.”

He began to understand what his teacher was saying a little bit.

“It just goes to show how powerful the pope is. That’s why a religion is a scary thing.”

But there was some other factor involved that made Jo Gi Chun really interested in the pope. Since a long time back, the imperial palace declared that the church was a demonic religion, and began to oppress the religion to a scary extent.

But not once was the palace succeed in destroying the religion. They weren’t even able to sneak a peek at the shadow of the pope, even. But the two people here would be able to meet the pope with a method like this.

“We’re here. Please get off the carriage.”

Um Seung Do stopped the carriage, and opened its doors.

They could see a large manor outside the carriage.

This was the Gansu branch of the church, and was also the place where the pope was currently staying at.

‘The pope is here.’

Cho Ryu Hyang was excited, too, it seemed.

It was obvious for a person to be curious about a man that was said to be the strongest in the world.

After going inside for a moment, Um Seung Do walked back out with a complicated face.

Once he saw Jo Gi Chun and Cho Ryu Hyang, he hurriedly organized his expression and spoke.

“Please come inside, sir. The pope is waiting.”

When they went inside, with Um Seung Do as their guide, they encountered two people.

After taking Jo Gi Chun and Cho Ryu Hyang here, Um Seung Do quickly went outside.

He determined that this wasn’t a place for him.

‘Is he the pope?’

The muscular old man whose black robe seemed like it would rip apart at any given moment.

His defining features were his big physique, and his tiger eyes. That old man was wearing the Black Dragon Robe (黑龍布) and was looking at them in the chair placed in the middle of the room.

And behind the old man, stood a middle-aged man who was smiling at them.

The old man in the Black Dragon Robe spoke.

“I am Gongson Chun Gi. Are you the ones that will help us out this time?”

Cho Ryu Hyang’s eyes shined.

He suddenly felt curious.

He began using his special vision to observe the pope.

At the moment, Guardian Wu just wanted to drop dead.

That was because he had to wear the Black Dragon Robe, and pretend to be the pope of all things.

‘Why can’t he just reveal himself.....’

He couldn't understand why the pope would do all this.

Weren't they just people who came to destroy a formation? They weren't even martial artists, so was there even a reason to hide himself?

[Fix your expression. It would be embarrassing if they found out now.]

Guardian Wu made a regal face again, and looked at the people in front of him.

One old guy and one young guy.

After looking at these two people, Guardian Wu began to wonder about something.

'Eh?'

The young guy was staring at the pope, instead of him.

Guardian Wu wasn't the only one that was surprised by this.

'Hm?'

It would be hard to say that the boy noticed, but this was still a

bit strange.

There was nothing that gave away the fact that the Gongson Chun Gi was actually the pope.

The pinnacle of normalcy.

The man barely had any presence right now.

Compared to that, Guardian Wu really was fit to be a pope. You could feel the aura of a conqueror just by standing near him.

[Your holiness.....]

[Don't do anything that actually gives us away, alright? He probably didn't notice it.]

Guardian Wu nodded a little, and opened his mouth.

“Please, take a seat. I prepared some snacks.”

The moment Guardian Wu spoke, Gongson Chun Gi brought out tea and snacks at a frightening speed.

Guardian Wu looked at all this anxiously, but Gongson Chun Gi performed everything naturally.



When he was about to leave, Cho Ryu Hyang opened his mouth.

“Um, this person is.....”

“Ah, his hol..., I mean, that person? Haha, he’s called Guardian Wu. I forgot to introduce him. He helps me out quite a bit.”

“I’m Guardian Wu. Please treat me well.”

Gongson Chun Gi easily pretended that he was Guardian Wu and introduced himself.

Jo Gi Chun introduced himself as well, but Cho Ryu Hyang was staring at the man with a very serious face. The boy’s whole body

was sweating, as he stared at Gongson Chun Gi.

When Jo Gi Chun began to get a little confused.

Gongson Chun Gi scratched the back of his head, and talked.

“Guardian Wu, an interesting fellow appeared, it seems.”

Gongson Chun Gi took a look at the confused Guardian, and then began staring at the boy.

At this, Cho Ryu Hyang went pale.

“Hey, boy, when did you acquire the Godly Eyes (神眼)? ”

Once he heard this question, Cho Ryu Hyang fainted.

Chapter 18. I Need A Disciple

“Ha! This boy’s interesting.”

Gongson Chun Gi caught the falling boy, and laughed. Guardian Wu’s eyes widened when he saw it.

How long had it been since he last saw the pope laugh so joyfully like this? Wasn’t this a laugh of pure joy, and not the light-hearted laugh that the pope usually used?

“The boy’s body isn’t even developed, but he dared to get the Godly Eyes? This boy’s really weird.”

“Your holiness, what do you mean?”

“This boy really messed up the order of doing this.”

Contrary to what he was saying, Gongson Chun Gi had an amazed expression. The fact that the boy’s Godly Eyes were open meant that he was seeing things that differed from what others were seeing.

Seeing a different world. Just that already meant that the boy had taken a step into the world of superhumans. If you were looking at this from a martial artist’s point of view, the boy already entered the harmonious stage.

‘Well, this is a bit different from martial arts.....’

After thinking about something for a while, Gongson Chun Gi stretched out his hand and started to search the boy. His eyes soon sparkled.

“Hoh?”

Gongson Chun Gi said this, as if he found something, then turned to the confused Guardian Wu, and spoke.

“Guardian Wu, come out with me for a bit.”

“Yes, your holiness.”

Guardian Wu and Gongson Chun Gi left Cho Ryu Hyang on the ground, and came outside. After coming out, none of them spoke for a while.

How much time had passed?

When Guardian Wu started to feel a bit impatient, Gongson Chun Gi spoke up.

“Guardian Wu.”

“Yes, your holiness.”

“This is a first.”

“I don’t understand.....”

“I think I might be able to grant you your lifelong wish. You can be happy.”

“My lifelong wish?”

Guardian Wu tilted his head in confusion. What was his lifelong wish again? When Guardian Wu kept trying to figure it out with a confused expression, Gongson Chun Gi answered him with impatience.

“Wasn’t your lifelong wish for me to get a disciple? I think I found someone I like today.”

“.....!”

Guardian Wu widened his eyes in surprise.

“T, truly?”

“Yeah? You think I’d just lie to you?”

Who was Gongson Chun Gi? He was a person that never took on

a disciple just because it would've been annoying.

The Heavenly Demon Church's only worry was right here. It could easily be said that the pope's martial art was the strongest under the heavens right now.

The problem was, this martial art wasn't able to be passed down.

No matter how much the elders and the guardians begged, the pope refused to take on a disciple.

But to think that the problem would be solved like this. Guardian Wu quickly came back to his senses.

He felt that this was the crucial moment. The heavens had granted him a chance to save the church's future. He spoke to the pope with a face full of determination.

"I'll take care of it, your holiness."

"What?"

"Wouldn't the old man that calls himself the boy's master be a hindrance? If you just tell me to do so, I'll take care of him without a trace."

When Guardian Wu said this, Gongson Chun Gi wrinkled his face. He clicked his tongue in displeasure.

“This is why the church gets insulted by everyone. Why wouldn’t we get insulted when we just go around killing people for one little thing? And don’t get too greedy yet. The boy didn’t agree to this yet.”

Guardian Wu laughed.

“Hehe, you’d have to be insane to refuse to become the heir of the church.”

The Heavenly Demon Church lead a force of 10,000 men. Fame and riches. You could acquire both by becoming the heir.

“Well, we don’t know for sure. Anyways, I actually called you up here was to tell you to not do anything foolish or say something useless,”

“Haha, I’m not even an immature child, there’s no way I’d do something like that.”

“Well, if it’s you, it’s certainly possible. An old man with too much energy is always dangerous.”

“Kh, hum hum.....”

When Guardian Wu put on a disappointed face.

Gongson Chun Gi opened his mouth.

“Let’s talk with that old man first.”

Jo Gi Chun, while stroking Cho Ryu Hyang’s head, felt a bit complicated.

‘Was I being too greedy.....’

There were too many things he was worried about from the start. But he still brought his disciple here because he wanted to let the boy see and experience the world a bit.

But it seemed to be a foolish decision. The boy seemed too frail and weak for all this. Since Jo Gi Chun felt like he gave the boy an unusually heavy load, he felt very sorry.

While he was thinking about many things, Gongson Chun Gi and Guardian Wu entered the door. Jo Gi Chun determined that the middle-aged man was actually the pope, and the old man was the Guardian. His judgement was correct.

“Is this boy your disciple?”

“Yes.”

After pausing a bit, Gongson Chun Gi spoke with an awkward smile.

“He’s pretty interesting.”

What was his intention?

When Jo Gi Chun observed the man in front of him a bit, Guardian Wu came up. And asked a question.

“What do you think about the church?”

“You mean the Heavenly Demon Church?”

“Yes.”

Jo Gi Chun felt that something was a bit off at that moment. This was from the instinct he developed after living for a long time. That was why he chose his next words carefully.

“I think it’s quite different from the rumors that circulate the world.”

Guardian Wu’s face lit up in pleasure.

This was the same for Gongson Chun Gi.

“The rumors about the church isn’t all true. Many of them are exaggerated. To think you would recognize it, I thank you.”

“It’s just what I felt after observing the church. No need to feel thankful.”

“Well, I’m still thankful for your words. Anyways, I’ll get right to the main point now.”

Jo Gi Chun nodded. He, too, wanted to get straight to the point, instead of talking mindlessly for a long time. Gongson Chun Gi sat on the throne on one edge of the temple, and spoke.

“To be honest, I have an interest in your disciple. To be even more honest, I think the boy has potential to become my heir. So I’m going to make a rude request here.”

“.....”

This was it.

The thing he was feeling from a while back.

Jo Gi Chun bitterly smiled in his mind. And he thought.

‘Isn’t this a good thing?’

Cho Ryu Hyang was a talented boy. The boy's talent for math was but a fraction of the boy's true capability. Yes, that was it.

Didn't he think this from a while back? He thought that he would let the boy take a different path if a chance came up. He always put this possibility in his mind, and steeled himself for it.

But when it actually happened, Jo Gi Chun hesitated. To think he would hesitate to make a decision that would ultimately benefit the boy.....

Jo Gi Chun felt much regret because the time he spent studying with his young disciple was far too short. It was hard to let go of the feeling of wanting to teach the boy more. Gongson Chun Gi, who was observing Jo Gi Chun's face, opened his mouth.

"I am aware this is a hard decision. I don't want to say this either....., but he is a boy I don't want to let go."

Gongson Chun Gi was serious. That was why he said this with honesty. He wanted Cho Ryu Hyang that badly.

If any of the guardians or elders of the church saw this, they'd be extremely surprised. To think that the pope would be think be this passionate about this. They would've been amazed.

But they were mistaken. Gongson Chun Gi didn't take on a disciple for a legitimate reason. He wanted to take on a disciple, in fact. The elders weren't aware of this, but he really tried hard.

But there wasn't a single person so far that had the capability to understand his teachings fully. That's why he didn't take on a disciple yet.

Jo Gi Chun, who was staying silent all this while, asked something.

“Are you truly the pope of the Heavenly Demon Church?”

“Yes, I am the owner of the church.”

“What can you do for this boy?”

“What can I do.....”

Gongson Chun Gi pondered on this seriously. He was the master of the Heavenly Demon Church, and he was one of the few people that possessed both fame and wealth. Being a master of the church meant that his words carried great responsibility. That's why he had to be careful with his response.

“Would you be satisfied if I said that I would dedicate every fiber of my being for this boy?”

Jo Gi Chun nodded, as if he was satisfied with the answer. He wanted to hear that. The words that promised to give the boy something that he would never be able to give. He wanted to hear

those words.



“If it’s that, I’m fine.”

The worries in his mind became lighter. Seeing the old man nod, Gongson Chun Gi smiled faintly and spoke.

“There was only a few times in my life where I’ve been this anxious. Thanks for agreeing to all this.”

After saying this, Gongson Chun Gi rolled up his sleeves and talked.

“Should we move onto the next step?”

“Is there still more to be done?”

When Guardian Wu made a confused face, Gongson Chun Gi nodded.

“Shouldn’t we hear what the boy has to say? We got permission from the teacher, but we didn’t hear the boy’s opinion yet.”

“Are you trying to wake him by injecting internal strength? If it’s that, this one will.....”

When Guardian Wu stepped forward and tried to put his hand on the boy, Gongson Chun Gi shook his head.

“That method’s too rough. It also leaves some negative effects afterwards, so it’s not good for children. I have a better method. Just watch.”

Gongson Chun Gi put his hand on Cho Ryu Hyang’s forehead. He then smiled a mysterious smile, one that was different from all others before it, and spoke.

“It’s time to wake up, boy.”

Cho Ryu Hyang was dreaming. In the dream, Cho Ryu Hyang was trying to look back on what had happened.

‘The door opened here.....’

When the door opened, he could see two people. A old man in a black robe, and an ordinary middle aged man.

‘After that.....’

After the old man said a few things, the middle aged man came up and prepared some snacks. Cho Ryu Hyang began to focus on this very moment.

‘Just what did I get surprised by?’

For some reason, he couldn’t remember. He was definitely surprised by something, but he couldn’t remember it. Cho Ryu Hyang folded his arms, and fell into deep thought.

‘What was it? It was really important.’

Even as he was pondering on this, the events in front of his eyes kept progressing.

‘After this.....’

If it was like before, the events should transition to the part where the middle aged man began introducing himself. But it didn’t continue.

The man who was preparing the snacks stood up, and looked at Cho Ryu Hyang straight in the eyes with a mischevious smile. Cho Ryu Hyang flinched a bit because of how lifelike it was.

“Eh? Ara?”

This didn’t happen before. Cho Ryu Hyang stepped back with a surprised face, and stepped back. The man just stepped forward, and grabbed onto Cho Ryu Hyang’s wrist.

“You trying to run again? I can’t let you do that.”

“.....”

Cho Ryu Hyang tried to throw off the man’s hand frantically. But it was impossible. He didn’t understand. It was definitely his dream, but the man in front of him somehow felt a bit foreign.

‘Why?’

When Cho Ryu Hyang was about to resist, the man grinned and spoke.

“You saw it?”

“.....”

“You saw it, didn’t you?”

Cho Ryu Hyang began to turn pale. The feeling that he saw something he wasn’t supposed to see. With this feeling, the fog in his mind lifted, and he could see the truth that lay behind it.

“You should pay for seeing my secrets, boy.”

The man’s forehead began to split in two horizontally. While Cho Ryu Hyang was looking at this with a terrified face, a blood red eye that appeared from the forehead.

The man’s original two eyes, and that blood red eye. A set of three eyes were staring at Cho Ryu Hyang.

‘Ah!’

Once Cho Ryu Hyang saw this, his whole body trembled. He finally remembered.

‘This was it!’

The reason Cho Ryu Hyang fainted. It was because of the impossible number on the man's forehead.

‘96!’

That number left Cho Ryu Hyang speechless, but something even more amazing than that happened after. Something that made Cho Ryu Hyang afraid.

The numbers on the man's forehead came together, and soon turned into a giant red eye that stared at him. Something like this never happened before.

The numbers turned into an eye and glared at him?

This phenomenon left him breathless.

“It's time to wake up, kid. We have quite a bit to talk about.”

When the red eye curved upwards as if it was laughing. Cho Ryu Hyang was forcefully pulled away from his dream.

Chapter 19. Um Seung Do Wants To Live

Gongson Chun Gi grinned inside Cho Ryu Hyang's dream. Now that the boy was out of his dream, he just had to get out on his own.

The Heavenly Demon Church had countless spells of sorcery, and the one Gongson Chun Gi used just now on the boy was the Demon Circle Eye (魔輪眼). This was a high-class spell that could interfere with the opponent's mind, and because of that, Gongson Chun Gi was able to get into Cho Ryu Hyang's dream.

A while after Gongson Chun Gi left, Cho Ryu Hyang, who was standing there like a stone statue, moved. Cho Ryu Hyang stretched his neck to loosen his muscles a bit, then opened his eyes to look around. He then spoke with a surprised tone.

“He has quite a bit of talent.”

The moment Cho Ryu Hyang spoke, his body became as soft as clay, and turned into the body of an old man.

The old man.

Zhuge Liang waved his feathered fan and looked around.

“The spell to get into a person's dream..... It resembles that guy's spell a bit.”

Zhuge Liang smiled unconsciously when he thought of someone from the past.

“To think I’d see the trace of Shiyuan (鳳雛: Pang Tong) here.....”

“Hak!”

When Cho Ryu Hyang regained his consciousness, Jo Gi Chun came up to him.

“Are you alright?”

Cho Ryu Hyang calmed himself, and opened his eyes. He could see his worried teacher, and the muscular old man.

‘Where’d the other one go?’

The middle aged man that scared him in the dream. After looking around for a while, Cho Ryu Hyang soon nodded. He could see the middle aged man, who had his eyes closed with a wrinkled face, sitting at one side of the temple.

‘This isn’t a dream.’

The mysterious presence he felt in the dream.

While Cho Ryu Hyang was feeling a bit dizzy, the middle aged man opened his eyes. The moment Gongson Chun Gi opened his eyes, he started wondering about something.

‘What was it?’

He just paid a visit to Cho Ryu Hyang’s dream, but it felt like he had missed something.

What was this? The feeling that he had just missed something huge? Gongson Chun Gi thought about it for some quite some time, then regained his senses, and approached Cho Ryu Hyang.

There was something even more important to be done.

Was this not the boy who could become his first disciple?

“Hm, hm. So, you woke up?”

“.....”

Cho Ryu Hyang looked at the man with an awkward face. He still couldn’t really determine whether if he was still in the dream or not.

After observing the boy for a while, Gongson Chun Gi opened his mouth.

“Go rest for now. There’s a lot to talk about, but that can come later.”

Guardian Wu seemed surprised.

“Your holiness! Why are we not taking care of this now?”

Matters like these had to be settled quickly. He wanted to take care of everything before the pope changed his mind. To Guardian Wu, the heir to the church had to be chosen quickly.

But unlike Guardian Wu, Gongson Chun Gi thought of the boy’s well being first.

“Be quiet, don’t you remember the phrase ‘haste makes waste’?”

“C, could it be that you’ve changed your mind?”

“Don’t worry, it’s not that.”

Gongson Chun Gi shook his head. He didn’t want to rush an exhausted child. Gongson Chun Gi took a look at Jo Gi Chun, and spoke.

“If you go out, the man who brought you here will be waiting. He’ll guide you to your room, so please have some rest there. We’ll talk after that.”

Jo Gi Chun nodded, and smiled. He felt satisfied by seeing Gongson Chun Gi be considerate towards Cho Ryu Hyang. He could feel that Gongson Chun Gi put the safety of the boy first and foremost out of anything. That moved Jo Gi Chun's heart.

“Let's go rest.”

“Yes, teacher.”

When Jo Gi Chun tried to support Cho Ryu Hyang to get out,, Guardian Wu came to him with haste.

“I'll take care of him for you.”

In Guardian Wu's eyes, Cho Ryu Hyang was already the heir to the church,

That's why he treated Cho Ryu Hyang with great care.

“I'm fine.”

Cho Ryu Hyang tried to walk away on his own, but Guardian Wu was insistent on helping him. Already the man had started to pour in his inner energy to strengthen the boy a bit.

“Don't refuse me, young lord. This old man's doing this because he wants to.”

Cho Ryu Hyang felt bothered by how the old man suddenly addressed him, but he didn't talk. Cho Ryu Hyang didn't even have the strength to do so. He wanted to rest for now.

Jo Gi Chun looked at the boy with a complicated face.

“Did you find out about Cho Ryu Hyang?”

“Yes. But we weren't able to find the specifics because time was short. We'll be able to find out more if we searched longer.”

“Just show me what you found.”

Neng Ha Young looked at the paper that her bodyguard gave her. Her eyes sparkled soon after reading it.

“His family runs a mercenary company?”

“Yes. That's all we found out for now.”

The name and the approximate age, and the appearance of the boy. To find all this so far was truly quite amazing. The time given was short, and the information about the individual was already non existent, after all.

Neng Ha Young expected this, but she was still disappointed. It felt like the boy had something special about him, but the information about the boy was too lacking. Neng Ha Young tapped the table with her index finger, and spoke.

“Is there no information about him regarding martial arts?”

“I apologize. We have not found out that much yet.”

The boy definitely learned something. A type of martial arts that was very profound. There would be no way for the boy to find a hidden peak expert like that otherwise.

“Move everyone in the guild who is currently available. That boy definitely has something to do with the Heavenly Demon Church.”

“I understand.”

If she found out the boy's relation with the Heavenly Demon Church, she would be able to find out what the church was currently trying to do in the Qilian mountains. Thinking that, Neng Ha Young looked back at the time when she separated a few days back from Cho Ryu Hyang.

“We'll have to split here.”

This was the first thing Um Seung Do said when they reached the docks. Neng Ha Young stared at Um Seung Do's face when she heard that.

“Weren’t we supposed to go to the Qilian mountains together?”

“Something bad happened at the church, so I must apologize.”

Um Seung Do was trying to push away the overly inquisitive girl here.

‘Wicked girl.’

If it was Neng Ha Young, she would be able to catch onto what the church was trying to do with just a small evidence. After all, she was pretty famous for her intelligence. In other words, she was bothersome. That was why Um Seung Do had to get rid of this cursed thing here.

Neng Ha Young glared at Um Seung Do. Wasn’t his plan too obvious? This man just didn’t want her to know more about what was going on with the church.

‘I just want to know about it even more now.’

What were they doing on the Qilian mountains? Wasn’t there any way to find out? She thought for a while, but couldn’t come up with anything.

‘This is a tricky excuse.’

Something happened at the Heavenly Demon Church. This was an excuse that prevented anyone from prying further.

Neng Ha Young, who was biting her lower lip in frustration, finally came up with something. She smiled. Um Seung Do forcefully smiled at her in response, even though he felt that something bad was going to happen.

“So we separate here.”

“Yes.”

“It’s a little regretful, isn’t it?”

“It is. But what can we do?”

Um Seung Do swore at Neng Ha Young’s face, and made a regretful face.

Neng Ha Young spoke right then.

“Let’s introduce ourselves more properly before we leave, shall we?”

“Introduce ourselves? I think we already know plenty about each other.....”

Neng Ha Young ignored Um Seung Do, and opened her mouth,

“Come to think of it, I didn’t even ask you your name yet. Big sis’s name is Neng Ha Young. What’s yours?”

Cho Ryu Hyang, at the moment, was trying to board the carriage in front of him. He could see the troubled Um Seung Do with Neng Ha Young. He could immediately see that there was something going on with the two.

Cho Ryu Hyang took a look at his teacher, and quickly settled on a decision.

And he spoke.

“Cho Ryu Hyang.”

Um Seung Do’s face twisted. Was the boy dumber than he thought? Could that boy really not see that this wasn’t a time to speak?

‘Could it be, this boy spoke on purpose?’

When he saw the boy’s face, it didn’t seem like a possibility. No, the boy did say his name on purpose.

Um Seung Do ground his teeth, and thrust Cho Ryu Hyang into the carriage.

“We should hurry, young sir. We don’t have much time.”

Looking at Um Seung Do, who put quite an emphasis on “young sir”, Cho Ryu Hyang nodded. He knew what Um Seung DO was trying to hide. So he leaked some information.

‘Neng Ha Young.....’

Come to think of it, he only knew that she was the granddaughter of Neng Mu Gi. He didn’t actually know her name.

“We’ll really have to say goodbye here.”

Um Seung Do said this, and quickly took off to the Qilian mountains.

The boy’s name was sure to be a clue for that crafty little girl. She’ll surely try to find out what the church was planning with the information. He really didn’t like these kids.

‘We must hurry.’

If the girl found out about all this after the event, then it would be all fine. But if she found out during the event happened, that would be different. The only option for him now was to finish all this as fast as possible.

‘If only we undo the formation at the Qilian mountains.....’

After that, things would get much easier. Thinking that, Um Seung Do moved faster.

“.....It’s going to take a while?”

“Yes.”

Um Seung Do’s face twisted.

He thought that nothing was ever going his way.

Jo Gi Chun, not caring a single bit about what Um Seung Do was thinking, looked at the stone wall with a complicated face and spoke.

“This is a bigger formation than you might think. It’s not something that can be undone in just a day or two.”

To Um Seung Do, Jo Gi Chun’s words were just like the death sentence. Um Seung Do made a horrified face, and spoke to Jo Gi Chun.

“It’s quite embarrassing to say this to you, but the church no longer has any time. The people from the Alliance figured out what

we were doing, and now they're swarming in like moths to a flame. Is there any way to do this faster?"

They had to avoid a fight with the Alliance. This was the will of the pope. And the will of the pope was the law to Um Seung Do.

Jo Gi Chun looked at Um Seung Do, and nodded. He knew that they didn't have much time. Why else would they leave Cho Ryu Hyang to rest and bring him here urgently?

"Just what is in here? Just what is it that is making you people so cautious?"

Jo Gi Chun still didn't know what the Heavenly Demon Church was, exactly. But he still could figure out that the organization was quite outstanding.

Indeed, the formation here could definitely be called the most complicated formation under the heavens. But if the people from the church made up their minds, they could always break it open by force.

But they didn't do that. They were approaching the formation as carefully as possible. That meant that there was something in the formation that was extremely valuable to them.

'Should I tell him?'

Um Seung Do thought a bit here. Should he tell the truth to the

old man? Did the old man have the right to know about what was in the formation?



While he was thinking about all this, Um Seung Do remembered the message Guardian Wu gave him.

[The boy might be the next heir to the church, so treat him with care. The old man could also become an important figure in the church later, so treat him well. You know what I'm talking about,

right?]

If he didn't understand the message when he was told that much, he would be an idiot. But to think that that arrogant little boy would become the heir? On their way to the Qilian mountains, Um Seung Do saved the boy once, but also tried to kill him. Back then, he just saw the boy as a disciple of the old man, after all. And he could get away with it just by saying that the boy was about to leak the church's secrets.

But, a heir? What was this? He was just about dead now. To think that he tried to kill a person who was about to become the young lord of the church..... by choking him, no less.

Um Seung Do wanted to scream when he thought that, but he didn't do so in front of Jo Gi Chun. But he really was feeling bleak. A message from Guardian Wu was almost guaranteed to be the truth.

'I'm screwed.'

'Is there any way to redeem myself?'

There was only one way for Um Seung Do to live. He had to look good in front of this old man, at least. His relation with Cho Ryu Hyang was at its absolute worst, but didn't he act quite well in front of this old man, at least? And the boy really revered his master quite well. He just had to look good in front of the old man. That was the way to live.

“There’s something extremely precious inside this, so we had to approach it carefully.”

“So what is it?”

Based on what the object was, Jo Gi Chun could use it while undoing the formation to an extent. That was because the formation would inevitably be damaged while being undone.

Um Seung Do spoke with a serious face.

“The strongest man from a hundred years back. Sword Devil Ak Jung Pae. This is his tomb.”

To be more truthful, this was the place where Ak Jung Pae’s treasures lay. With his martial arts technique..... The Heavenly Demon Church came to retrieve those items.

Chapter 20. If You Don't Know Where To Go, Just Go Straight

At the Taebaek (太白), located near the Shaanxi castle (陝西省), lies a dangerous mountain. Two boys arrived at this place, known as the Martial Fire Peak (武火嶺), at about noon.

“.....I think we're lost.”

When a boy with a thin physique muttered this, the tanned boy in front twitched a little. Without saying anything else, the two kept moving forward.

How long did they walk?

They could suddenly see an open field in front of them.

“Oh!?”

The tanned boy who was walking at the front. Peng Ga Ho smiled in joy. He soon came back to his senses, and smiled proudly.

“Umhahahaha! How is it? Did you see? This ability to be able to travel to new locations skillfully like this? You can admire big brother as much as you want.”

The thin boy. Nangong Yubin came into the empty field, looked around, and opened his mouth with a worried expression.

“We somehow found the right path..... But is this really castle Gansu?”

“Hmph! To think you’d still doubt me after seeing all this..... You’re a person who doesn’t trust others too much, it seems. Since we traveled in a straight line, obviously we’d be at castle Gansu.”

“Does really it work like that.....”

Nangong Yubin brushed off a leaf on his head, and faintly smiled. To be truthful, traveling in a straight line, especially in the mountains, was nearly impossible. But he didn’t retort to Peng Ga Ho’s words too much, because this could really be castle Gansu.

‘Come to think of it, this was all just an idiotic trip.’

Nangong Yubin thought of what had happened, and bitterly smiled.

Peng Ga Ho and Nangong Yubin.

They were both young, and didn’t know much about the world.

Since they were usually being taken care of by others all the time, a long trip like this was a first for them. These two both held a high position in society, ever since they were young.

Thankfully, they were smart.

The thing that mattered the most in a travel.

Money.

They both packed their pockets full of money.

“We have enough money, so lets think about how to travel. Do you know the way to the castle, by any chance?”

When Nangong Yubin asked this question without much expectation, Peng Ga Ho answered with a relaxed expression.

“Fufu, this is quite a dumb question, coming from such a smart person like you, Nangong Yubin. Is there anyone in the world that doesn’t know how to get to castle Gansu?”

Nangong Yubin shrugged with an embarrassed expression.

“I don’t know the way.”

“At which direction is castle Gansu located at?”

“That would be..... West?”

“That’s it.”

Nangong Yubin should've disagreed to Peng Ga Ho's idea here. To think they would travel from East corner of the continent to the West corner in a straight line.....

Even Nangong Yubin didn't see this coming. This was just completely unexpected.

‘Well, we did save a lot of time.’

Nangong Yubin brushed off the dust and the branches on his clothes, and smiled bitterly. It was too late to be regretful.

But Nangong Yubin was still a bit satisfied. Thanks to Peng Ga Ho, he was able to experience many things that couldn't be bought with money. He trained his body during the hardships they went through, and saw many strange and exotic things. And lastly, the quote that was forever etched into his mind.

‘If you don't know the path, go ask someone who knows about it.’

Nangong Yubin trembled when he thought of the past 20 days. Even though Nangong Yubin trained his body with martial arts, this trip was still very challenging.

“What direction should we go in now?”

When Nangong Yubin asked this, Peng Ga Ho spoke while brushing off the various objects on his clothes.

“Fufu, since we found the path here, we’d be able to reach castle Gansu if we follow it.”

When Peng Ga Ho said this.

“Castle Gansu my ass. If you follow this road, you’ll end up at the Martial Fire Peak (武火嶺), kids.”

Nangong Yubin and Peng Ga Ho turned around. And they sighed. They were surrounded by 10+ people.

“Bandits?”

There were about 20 of them. Looking at them, Nangong Yubin whispered to Peng Ga Ho, who immediately nodded. Peng Ga Ho stepped forward.

“Hey, bro, you’re the top dog, right?”

“What? Bro? Top dog?”

The eyebrows of the muscular man at the front twitched.

Iron Hands (鐵手) Sim Duk Hoon (謹德訓).

He, the master of the Martial Fire Peak, grew angry. Why did the boy have to use the word, “top dog”, instead of a more proper word like “boss”? It wasn’t like he was the local gang leader or anything. Sim Duk Hoon’s mood immediately turned for the worse.

‘When was the last time I heard something as arrogant as this?’

The memories of events like this only happened a very long time ago. The only thing he could remember was pulling the tongue of another arrogant fellow and hanging him on a tree. Since he was always pampered with praises from his minions, Peng Ga Ho’s casual style of speaking was something Sim Duk Hoon hadn’t seen in a long time.

When Sim Duk Hoon thought of this, his face began to show some hints of confusion.

‘Come to think of it.....’

These two were obviously nothing but amateurs. Compared to him, who lived in the martial world for more than twenty years, these boys were really just amateurs to Sim Duk Hoon.

But they actually dared to treat him in that matter? Did these kids have a death wish? Or did they actually have something backing them up?

When he thought that much, he started to feel nervous. Because

of that, he took a careful look at these two kids. Then he just laughed.

‘I started to get worried over nothing.’

It seemed he started to worry more about useless things as he got older. The boy’s clothes were torn up, and were covered in dust, as if they hadn’t cleaned it for a few days. They were definitely some lost kids that just came here without knowing anything.

When he thought this much, Sim Duk Hoon sighed. It seemed he’d have to see blood in broad daylight.

“Hehe, don’t be angry, boss. These are just babies who don’t know anything, after all.”

“You want to be the one to get beat up instead then?”

The co-head, Suh Sang Joon, who was standing next to his boss, was quietly repressed into a small corner by Sim Duk Hoon’s glare. Sim Duk Hoon, looking at that, repressed some of his anger, and looked at the arrogant babies in front of him.

“I don’t know where you beggars are from, but can’t you see what kind of a situation you’re in? Are your eyes just there as decoration?”

Peng Ga Ho looked around for a moment, then tilted his head to the side. It seemed he didn’t really understand. Then, once again,

he just went on and said whatever he wanted to say.

“Hey bro, where the heck is this Martial Fire Peak, anyways? It’s just another word from Castle Gansu, right? We’re in a hurry, you know.”

“This little son of a bitch.....”

Sim Duk Hoon’s patience ended here. His minions all surged forward towards Peng Ga Ho and Nangong Yubin.

In a moment, with a satisfying smack, those two idiots will be strung up like dogs. Thinking that, Sim Duk Hoon calmed his mind, but he immediately made a confused expression.

The boy who was standing there quietly had a sword in his hand. He had pulled out his sword in an extremely clean manner.

If it ended there, he wouldn’t have thought much about it. But then the big kid up front could also be seen with a big sword in his hands, complaining.

“Damn, are you trying to get me annoyed, or what?”

And then.

Papapak–



“Kuak!”

“Kehoh!”

Sim Duk Hoon’s eyes widened so much that it seemed like it would fall right out of the sockets. His minions, his trusty minions were all being beat up.

These kids weren't just normal children. Actually, they could be called experts at this level. A first-rate expert, at that. The minions, however, learned their martial arts by picking up some moves in the streets. In short, they were third-rate.

Obviously the minions wouldn't be able to deal with first-rate experts. Looking at the swordplay each of the kids were displaying, Sim Duk Hoon screamed in his heart.

‘Damned Five Families!’

The kids were definitely disciples of the famous Five Families. Those bastards from the family only cared about how pure-blooded their members were.

‘A year in one of the five families is equivalent to 10 years in the martial world.’

This was the rumor floating in the martial world, and it wasn't so far-off from the truth, either. The amount of practice the people from the clans went through was unknown, but the fact that they were from the five families would still get them recognized in the martial world.

But why? Why would these kids roam the mountains without even a single guard, then? Why didn't they just take that perfectly fine path over there, and roam the wilderness?

‘This.....’

He immediately felt that he was caught in a bad situation. He felt that blood was going to be spilt from a while back. But to think that the ones whose blood is being spilt would be his.

Sim Duk Hoon kept complaining in his mind. If only he knew that these kids had ties with the five families, he wouldn't have made a mistake like this! He might be stretching it a bit, but this was the kids' fault.

While Sim Duk Hoon was laying out all these excuses, the situation had already closed up. Since the skill difference between the kids and the minions were quite big, Peng Ga Ho and Nangong Yubin were able to subjugate the bandits without shedding a drop of blood.

Sim Duk Hoon came back to his senses when he heard the painful moans from his minions, and immediately set out to fix the situation.

“Where are you young lords from?”

His proud look from before had vanished completely, and his way of speaking had turned almost shamefully polite.

“You don't need to know that. Where are we?”

Peng Ga Ho's question was answered immediately.

“Yes, young lord. This is the Martial Fire Peak, located at the Taebaek in castle Shaanxi. Is there anything else you want to know?”

“What? Castle Shaanxi? Martial Fire Peak? Are you crazy? This isn’t castle Shaanxi, it’s castle Gansu.”

Sim Duk Hoon made a troubled face for a moment, then immediately spoke.

“Young lord, I’ve ‘worked’ here for a very long time……. hehe.”

Looking at the Sim Duk Hoon, who was bowing in front of him, Peng Ga Ho began thinking. Trying not to get noticed by Nangong Yubin too much, he began whispering to Sim Duk Hoon.

“Bro, is castle Gansu far from here?”

“Eh? No. If you follow this road here, it’ll come out. It’s a one day trip in a carriage. Hehe.”

“What? So we were just about there?”

Peng Ga Ho’s face warmed up, and he looked at Nangong Yubin with a look of pride.

“See? My plan was flawless!”

Nangong Yubin, who grasped Peng Ga Ho's personality after traveling with him for so long, smiled and opened his mouth.

“Yea, good job.”

“Big bro's a reliable man.”

Peng Ga Ho and Nangong yubin smiled at each other.

Then, Peng Ga Ho suddenly opened his mouth.

“We're almost there, so why not eat before we leave?”

“Where?”

Peng Ga Ho made an evil smile, and glanced at Sim Duk Hoon. Nangong Yubin, who followed Peng Ga Ho's eyes, scratched his cheeks and spoke with a small voice.

“.....Good idea.”

When Nangong Yubin agreed, Peng Ga Ho turned around.

“Hey bro, is the food here tasty?”

“What?”

When Sim Duk Hoon made a confused expression. Peng Ga Ho wrapped his arm around the man's shoulder naturally, and spoke.

"I'm kinda hungry after moving my body a bit. Give me some food, yeah?"

"Ah..... sure."

Sim Duk Hoon wiped off his sweat, and spoke.

"Of course we have to treat you boy heroes. Our food might not be that good, but follow me."

"I'm kind of picky, you know. If the food isn't good, I get violent."

".....I'll tell the chef to be careful."

This black-hearted bastard was sure to be something big later on. To try to steal a bandit's food..... It seemed Sim Duk Hoon's luck was especially bad today.

Sim Duk Hoon, who was filled with anxiety for some reason, led the two boys to their hideout. The two happy boys and the miserable bandits headed for the Martial Fire Peak.

But Peng Ga Ho and Nangong Yubin still hadn't realized this: the

fact that their destination was going to be an extremely dangerous warfield. They didn't expect it at all.

While Jo Gi Chun was observing the formation he was assigned, Cho Ryu Hyang was laying in his room, exhausted. But for some reason, the tired boy couldn't go to sleep. So he kept his eyes closed, and started to think.

The Faultless View of The World.

It became weird.

He couldn't really explain it, but something about it had changed.

He felt this after he met the pope. Before that was.... what should he call it? It was something that he didn't think was significant.

But after he met the pope, that insignificant something seemed much more important.

‘Since when was it like this?’

When he thought for a while, an answer floated up.

‘Was it since then?’

After eating the Heavenly Demon Spirit Pill. After treating the side effect from the pill with inner energy, something about the Faultless View had changed.

‘Did it break?’

The red eye that was on the head of the pope. That was definitely not an illusion. That was because the eye was able to stay visible, even if he looked at it with the Faultless View.

Cho Ryu Hyang slowly opened his eyes, and looked at the ceiling. Then, everything, including the ceiling, could be seen with numbers on it.

‘It definitely changed.’

In order to use the Faultless View, Cho Ryu Hyang had to breathe deeply, and had to focus his mind. But not now. Now, as long as he willed it, he could see these numbers.

And the numbers were moving around him, as if they were alive. To think they were moving as if they were asking for Cho Ryu Hyang to touch them..... This was like.....

‘It’s like they’re alive.’

When Cho Ryu Hyang thought this much, he could hear the voice

of the old man in his mind.

[Sometimes, the things that can be seen with the eyes isn't everything.]

The old man, after saying that, paused for a while. When he spoke again, his voice held an acceptable tone in it.

[It doesn't sit right with me since it feels like I'm handing a little child a treasured sword, but since I know that you'd be able to understand it, I'm telling you now.]

Cho Ryu Hyang waited quietly. He felt that the old man was about to teach him something. His prediction was indeed correct.

Seizing Conversion Technique (捉換法).

This was the name of the second equation he learned from the old man, and this would enable him to freely change the value of any number contained within matter.

This wasn't something that stopped at the point of sight, like the Faultless View. This was a terrifying ability that enabled the boy to be able to use the numbers in actual combat.

Chapter 21. The Spark Of The Alliance-Demon War

The number of people that gathered in order to strike down the Heavenly Demon Church numbered around 5,000 men. Since their numbers kept on rising as others joined in, the estimated number of martial artists in their group would number about 8000 when they would fight the Heavenly Demon Church.

Thanks to the immense amount of people here, the Gansu Branch of the Alliance were extremely troubled. The people they could house in the Gansu branch were limited, so they were unable to hold all the members that came in.

Because of that, the Gansu branch rented out all the houses in the area to house the members of the Alliance. However, even that was reaching its limit. There really were an immense amount of people coming in. Since crowds of people who claimed to be allies of the Alliance kept gathering, the Gansu branch eventually had to build tents for the newcomers.

“Except for the Zhuge Clan, who went into isolationism about a year ago, every clan connected to the Alliance sent their elites. Right now, 5000 experts are under your command, and in 4 days, about 2000 more will arrive.”

The strategist of the Alliance.

Mystical Hand Sanguan Zhongda.

The old scholar, who was nearing the age of 60, was reporting something politely to a person.

There weren't many people he had to show respect to in the martial world. The person in front of him was one of those people. That man was one of the three sovereigns, Baek Mu Ryang, the Dao Emperor.

"I made the people here quite troubled. I feel a little sorry for them."

"We're here to slay the great demon. Everyone here is sure to respect your decision."

"Will they....."

Baek Mu Ryang.

He, who had a saintly look about him just a moment ago, suddenly grinned.

"But did they truly come here because of my order? They're really overdoing it with the amount of people they're bringing here."

Sanguan Zhongda had a faint smile on his face.

“They probably have an ulterior motive.”

“It’s no surprise, considering the fact that you were the one that was pulling the strings all along.”

“I just let them have a small peek at the hidden truth.”

The hidden truth. It was the fact that the Heavenly Demon Church was actually after the tomb of Ak Jung Pae, the Sword Demon.

He leaked that fact a little on purpose. The effects were immediate. Multiple clans that belonged to the Alliance gathered their elites, and sent them here. They were obviously aiming to take the legendary martial arts technique. They weren’t here to destroy the demonic church. The Alliance pretended to not notice their intent.

“By the way, do we still not have any info on who is coming from the Heavenly Demon Church?”

“No. Since they are a organization that’s quite hard to infiltrate, their actions have yet to be revealed.”

“Che, that’s always the problem.”

The Heavenly Demon Church’s trait as a religious group made them very hard to infiltrate. Even if someone managed to get in, they would always stay in the outer circle of the church. The

church's closed nature proved to be useful in keeping out information.

“The Black Moon Guild probably knows about all this at this point, right?”

“Yes, they should've noticed by now.”

“Who's coming from their side?”

“I heard the Chasing Blood Lord is coming.”

“Hoh? Sang Dong Ha, that fellow's on the move?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Things are getting pretty fun.”

The Dao Emperor Baek Mu Ryang started tapping on the table next to him, and spoke.

“By the way, do you actually think that everything will go according to the plan?”

Sanguan Zhongda smirked.

“Have you ever seen anything this big ever go according to plan?”

“Yeah, you’re right. I wonder what’s going to go wrong this time.... I wonder what kind of unexpected variables there would be this time.”

“I’m not really worried about those variables. What worries me is the possibility that we would be put into the worst possible situation.”

“The worst situation.....”

Baek Mu Ryang had a playful smile on his face.



“Are you talking about him?”

“Yes.”

“You’re not really sure about the results, even with me?”

“Right now, yes.”

Baek Mu Ryang made a sad expression when he heard this.

“Why do you think I’d be weaker than him, when we’re both one of the three sovereigns?”

The figure they are talking about.

They were talking about the Dark Demon Emperor, Gongson Chun Gi.

“I don’t think that you would lose. Don’t misunderstand.....”

“Then what?”

“I just think you should try to avoid fighting him.”

“Can’t I just beat him up?”

“That would just complicate things, but if things come down to the worst, you would have to do that.”

“It’s complicated, huh.”

Sanguan Zhongda smiled.

Of course it would be hard for the likes of Baek Mu Ryang to understand. That man was only interested in fighting, so the man was a little lacking when it came to politics.

Despite all that, the reason why Baek Mu Ryang was able to become the leader of the Alliance was because of his unparalleled strength. His immense strength was what gave him power and fame.

‘If you look at it that way, Gongson Chun Gi would truly be an amazing person.’

Gongson Chun Gi possessed undisputed strength, and he also was talented in politics. Sanguan Zhongda didn’t want to admit it, but Gongson Chun Gi’s every move was something that had every possible situation imaginable accounted for. This was something that had to be noted carefully.

‘And.....’

The Heavenly Balance.

To think there was one more person who knew about it other than he.

It was quite a shock. The balance between the three powers. To think that the one maintaining it wasn't him, but the Heavenly Demon Church.....

It wasn't something he could easily accept. It hurt his pride quite a lot.

‘This is definitely something I have to look into.’

The one that planned everything up till now was Sanguan Zhongda. He was the one that made the leader make his move, and he was also the one that leaked some info to the clans. That's how he created this immense battle between the two sides. Just to confirm one thing.....

‘If the leader of the Heavenly Demon Church truly wants to maintain the balance, he'll try to avoid this fight at all costs.’

But even that will be too hard now. The things that were at stake here became too big.

In the worst scenario. One of them would suffer a hit they won't be able to recover from. Then the balance would crumble. That cannot be allowed to happen.

They decided to work with the Dark Moon Guild with that purpose. If only one of the powers take a hit, the balance would crumble. Then what would happen if all three of them took a hit? The balance would be maintained.

The Black Moon Guild was actually the variable that made the two other powers hesitate from making a move.

‘Show me, Gongson Chun Gi. Prove to me that you were the real master of the martial world.’

If Gongson Chun Gi showed even a slight movement of trying to avoid the fight, Sanguan Zhongda would do anything in order to cancel the fight between the two powers.

“You found something interesting?”

Mystical Hand Sanguan Zhongda.

He was massaging his forehead as he was looking at the White Tiger Lord.

The White Tiger Lord.

Sanguan Jin Gul, Sanguan Zhongda’s nephew, nodded and spoke.

“Yes, the spy we put in the Black Moon Guild brought some interesting information.”

“The Black Moon Guild?”

“Yes. It’s about the girl that you told us to monitor carefully, Neng Ha Young. That’s why I came here in a hurry.”

“Neng Ha Young…….”

Sanguan Zhongda’s tired face turned into one of interest. Since a long time back, he had constantly tried to create inner conflicts within the guild. His strategy somewhat worked, which caused various cracks to appear in the Black Moon Guild.

But the one that was carefully fixing these cracked was Neng Ha Young. She was only 15. At that age, most girls would fanatically try to collect various accessories, but not Neng Ha Young. She was carefully trying to maintain the balance between the guild and the Alliance in the shadows. She wasn’t someone to be taken lightly.

“What is it?”

Seeing the expression on his uncle’s face, Sanguan Jin Gul made a satisfied smile.

“She was trying to find a person.”

“A person?”

“Yes. It was a order that was personally given by her. Because of that, the Black Moon Guild is expending everything they have to collect information.”

“Yeah? Who’re they trying to find?”

“It’s him.”

Sanguan Zhongda tilted his head a bit when he got the document from his nephew. That was because he had seen a name that he didn’t recognize on it.

“Cho Ryu Hyang? Blue Sky Mercenaries?”

“Yes, he’s the heir to the Blue Sky Mercenaries. He’s now 11.”

Sanguan Zhongda made a confused expression as he put the document down.

“Why’s Neng Ha Young trying to find a little brat?”

“We got a detailed explanation as to why she was trying to find him. It’s all in the document.”

“I don’t have time for that. Tell me yourself.”

Sanguan Jin Gul made a surprised expression. His uncle always did things the official way, no matter how urgent a matter was. But to think that this uncle would be this rushed.... Did his uncle find this matter extremely important? Sanguan Jin Gul’s face turned serious.

“Neng Ha Young seems to believe that the boy has a connection to the Heavenly Demon Church.”

“The Heavenly Demon Church?”

“Yes.”

“Why?”

What’s the Heavenly Demon Church got anything to do with this? Sanguan Zhongda didn’t understand. But when he heard what his nephew said next, his face stiffened.

“It seems that she has met up with a figure from the church.”

Sanguan Zhongda’s face changed greatly. This wasn’t something that couldn’t be ignored.

“The Heavenly Demon Church and the Black Moon Guild met up with each other? Is this true?”

“I can swear my life upon it.”

Sanguan Zhongda nodded when he heard this. And he gestured his nephew to continue.

When he saw his uncle’s gesture, Sanguan Jin Gul organized the information in his head based on the level of importance. He then told his uncle these information carefully.

“Neng Ha Young immediately went back to Gansu after coming in contact with the people from the church, and began to search for Cho Ryu Hyang. Since this event wasn’t covered up quite well, the spies we implanted in the guild were able to attain this information easily.”

“She’s collecting information without even trying to hide her movements? This must be quite urgent.”

“Yes, she did seem hurried. But the information they collected on the boy will probably be minimal. We were hindering them from getting the info since while back.”

“Did you do that?”

“Yes. Since all this happened pretty fast, I did it on my own accord. Is there anything wrong, perhaps.....”

“No, you did well.”

Sanguan Jin Gul made a happy face when he got praised. After all, his uncle rarely praised anyone at all.

“Cho Ryu Hyang.....”

A brat appeared at an unexpected time. Sanguan Zhongda began thinking. He soon opened his mouth.

“You said Neng Ha Young was here, at Gansu?”

“Yes, she’s currently residing in the Black Moon Guild’s Gansu branch.”

“So she came here for the events in the Qilian mountains? To think that she’d come to the Alliance’s territory just for that, she’s quite rash.”

“We don’t know why she came here yet. We’ll investigate.”

“She’s probably here for what’s going on with the mountains. She probably made this move separately from Sang Dong Ha.”

“What shall we do?”

Sanguan Zhongda began thinking. He soon spoke.

“It’s good to get rid of unpredictable variables. Leak the info that she’s here to Sang Dong Ha. And leak the info about who she’s trying to find, too.”

“Yessir.”

“It wouldn’t have much of an effect in the whole situation, but it’s better to get rid of this variable, anyways.”

“We’ll try to be as quick as possible.”

“Good. Now, leave.”

“Yes, uncle.”

Even now, Sanguan Zhongda didn’t realize what kind of a relationship he would have with Cho Ryu Hyang in the future.

“The Sword Emperor Flag really is quite useful. To think I’d have the rare luck of seeing all of you, hoho…….”

The clan leaders gathered here made an awkward smile when they heard this.

“Well, you’re all busy, so I should understand. If I get sad because

none of you want to meet up with an old man, you'll just see me as an annoying senior, after all."

"It seems your style of speaking hasn't changed, chief."

The old beggar.

When the king of all the beggars in the martial world, Tae Eul Shen Gai, said this, the tense atmosphere in the room relaxed a little bit.

Looking at the old beggar, the chief smiled.

"You've gotten old."

"We all age, you know, did you think I wouldn't get old?"

"The time I found you as a child seems just like yesterday. You've really aged."

".....Are you trying to set the mood by talking about things from the past again?"

The chief looked at Tae Eul Shen Gai with a sorrowful look, and spoke in a low voice.

"I seem to remember a young beggar that begged me to save him

when I look at you. At least you were cute back then.... now.... well.....”

“Damn..... why are you bringing up a story from thirty years ago?”

Tae Eul Shen Gai’s face went red as he started to complain, but the chief didn’t stop teasing the man.

“Huh, now that he’s old, he just goes on to being all hostile to his savior. Times have been quite hard on me. They say you should never take in a young animal without caution..... old saying are always true, it seems.”

“Chief, please..... Let’s just get on with the meeting.”

The chief took a look at the old beggar’s face for a moment, and then nodded with a face of understanding.

“Since the old beggar wants me to stop so much, I will. Let’s get on with the meeting.”

Why did the chief always tease him? While Tae Eul Shen Gai was trying his best not to start complaining, the chief went on talking.

“Thank you for coming here to take care of the Heavenly Demon Church. I appreciate your hard work.”

The representatives of the clans all nodded. While they did come here because of the Sword Emperor Flag, they all had ulterior motives for being here.

‘Ak Jung Pae’s Moon Edge Blade Technique.’

No one was daring to say it out loud, but they were all here to take it for themselves. To them, the Heavenly Demon Church was just an obstacle.

“There’s not much that I can give for you hard-working people..... but I will make a proposal here for you. This is something that I’ve come up with, and it hasn’t been told to anyone yet. I think you’ll all like it.”

Sanguan Zhongda, who was standing behind the chief, made a confused expression. Why did the chief make it sound so grand? Just what was he going to say? Sanguan Zhongda started getting anxious.

“I know that you’re all here for a personal reason. It’s sad, but this is reality. I understand.”

Everyone at the meeting room made a strange face. They were all keeping their movements secret. Since this was a matter that was quite embarrassing to talk about, everyone pretended to not know anything about it. But why did the Sword Emperor mention this? What did he have in his mind?

“I’ll make a proposal as the chief. You came here because of the Mood Edge Blade Technique, right? I’ll give it to you. Take it.”

“.....!”

“I’ll give it to the clan that finds it first. How is it? Isn’t this something that you’d like?”

“Ooh! Chief, are you speaking the truth?”

When Tae Eul Shen Gai said this, Baek Mu Ryang nodded.

“I always speak the truth. You know that, right? You know how truthful I am.”

Tae Eul Shen Gai thought a little bit, and nodded. Come to think of it, he never saw the chief lie. Looking at that, the leader of the Hebei Peng clan, Peng Mu Chun (彭蕪淺), laughed out loud.

“Kuhahaha! I like you, chief. The Peng clan sees you in a new light.”

“I’ve been told to be quite bold when I was young, hahaha.”

Sanguan Zhongda stood behind Baek Mu Ryang with a stupid look on his face.

‘Was I underestimating him?’

The chief he was looking at now wasn't an ignorant musclehead. He was a clear-minded person who was analysing the situation quite accurately, and he also knew how to make the situation be advantageous for him.

‘And.....’

The chief seemed to have a sly side to him, too. The meeting room, which seemed quite unmotivated just a while ago, was now bursting with energy.

The power to move the hearts of men.

‘The chief was the master of manipulation (庸人術), it seems.....’

The chief, feeling the heat in the air, glanced behind himself. Sanguan Zhongda was standing there with a pale face.

[What you've been planning till now is useless at this point. Truthfully, wasn't the martial world too peaceful till now? I didn't like the martial world in that state. The martial world should be a place where strength rules over all.]

It seemed the chief expected all this from the start.

‘I was an idiot.’

Sanguan Zhongda made a bitter smile when he heard the chief's message. He was being played all along. The chief just struck him at the best possible moment. This gave Sanguan Zhongda quite a shock.

‘I’ve learned a good lesson.’

Sanguan Zhongda bowed down to the chief with a feeling of defeat. He was thanking the chief for teaching him a new lesson.

Looking at that, the chief smiled. It was finally time for the Alliance to rule the martial world.

‘I’ve waited too long.’

A still pool of water was bound to spoil. Sometimes, someone had to clear it out, even with excessive measures. That was what the chief thought, and the chief's decision would spill much blood on the martial world.

The first Alliance/Demon war was about to begin.

Chapter 22. A Teacher's Affection

“Hey teach.”

“What?”

“Why do you like me? Because I’m smart? Because I’m able to understand everything you teach me?”

“.....Where in hell did you hear something so stupid?”

Young Gongson Chun Gi looked up at the man sitting on the top of the tree.

“Then why’d you choose me? You had disciples other than me.”

“You think I chose you?”

“You didn’t?”

The man with the red hair. He, who was the previous pope of the church, the Hellfire Demon, made a dumbfounded face.

He then replied to his disciple with a smirk.

“A teacher doesn’t choose his student. The student is the one that chooses his teacher.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“You’ll see when you get a disciple.”

“Yeah?”

Young Gongson Chun Gi tilted his head in curiosity.

Looking at that, the pope spoke.

“By the way, you know what I wish the most these days?”

“What?”

“I wish a guy like you becomes your disciple. A person as idiotic as you. Seriously, I’ve never seen a person as dumb as you during the seventy years of my life.”

“Is that a compliment?”

When young Gongson Chun Gi asked this with a happy face, the pope just muttered something while looking up at the sky.

“.....I wish I could see my teacher nowadays. I’ve probably sinned too much for that to ever happen, though.”

“You should be a good person, teach.”

When the pope heard Gongson Chun Gi’s comment from below, he just laughed.

“I should. It’s a little too late, though.....”

“Hey, what was teacher’s teacher like?”

“My teacher?”

“Yeah. Teacher’s teacher.”

“My teacher..... hehe, he was a dense old man.”

Young Gongson Chun Gi made a surprised face.

He then asked a question.

“Like you?”

“.....Sometimes, I just can’t tell if you’re just joking or telling the truth. That just drives me crazy.”

“I’m always truthful, teach.”

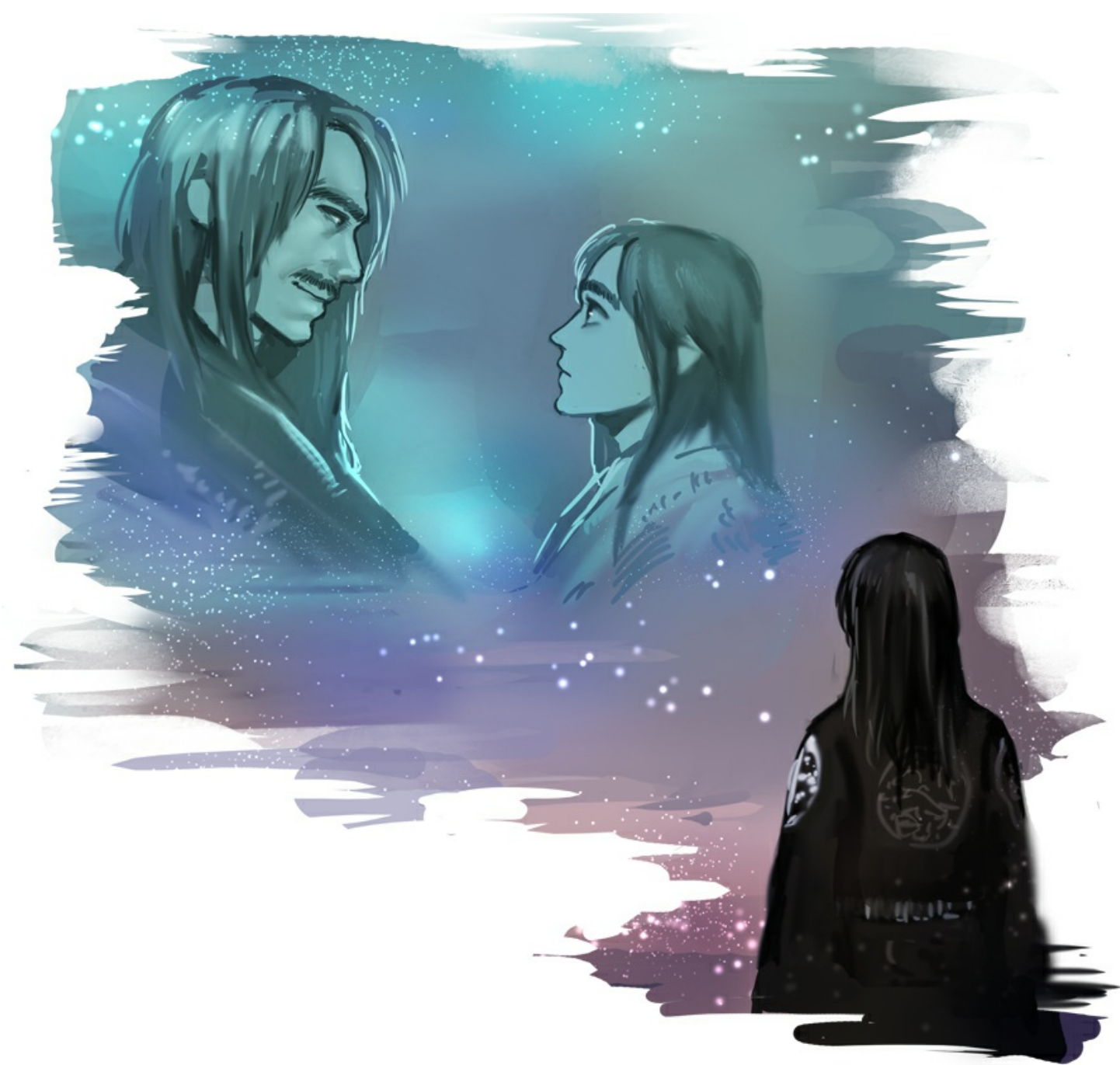
“That just makes me angrier, damned disciple.”

“Don’t get angry, teach. It’s bad for your health. That’s what the medicine guy said. He even gave you pills for it last time, remember?”

“Damn it..... who do you think made me eat those pills in the first place? Hah... The fact that there’s no one talented as this idiot makes me sad.”

That’s how the pope passed on his martial arts techniques to young Gongson Chun Gi, all the while complaining about his own circumstance.

After several decades, Gongson Chun Gi was looking up into the sky at the same place where he held the conversation with his teacher.



“I was actually messing with you a little back then, teach. Your reactions were just too funny.”

Gongson Chun Gi grinned, and stroked the the same tree the previous pope sat on.

“I thought you were joking back then, but I guess it was actually true, huh. A disciple really was the one that chose the teacher. I kind of understand what you were talking about now.”

Touching the rough bark of the tree with his palm, Gongson Chun Gi kept muttering to himself.

“It doesn’t happen often, but I want to see you at times like this. I was kind of jealous of your straightforwardness. Especially when this kind of stuff happens.”

The person who chooses the disciple isn’t the teacher. The teacher merely provides a chance for the disciple to take him, but the final decision is always made by the disciple himself.

“Cho Ryu Hyang, was it? I wish he would be one of those cheeky people you wanted me to take in. I don’t really want to take in an indecisive person. I’d rather take a ferocious one.”

Gongson Chun Gi stared up at the sky, and jumped up to the tree branch his teacher liked to sit on. He spoke again while lying down on the branch.

“Come to think of it, I think I thought that you were going to be my teacher from the start. That’s probably why I didn’t refuse you when you said that I would be your heir.”

Gongson Chun Gi looked up at the sky, which was obstructed by several leaves and branches, and smiled.

“The view here’s actually pretty good. It’s indeed a place that teacher would’ve liked.”

In the beginning.

Gongson Chun Gi met the pope at Gansu, and not the main headquarters of the church.

That's why Gongson Chun Gi believed that his meeting with Cho Ryu Hyang might've actually been fate.

"I should go meet the boy."

"Oh! You finally decided?"

"Decide? I'm not the one to decide. The kid is the one that'll decide. I'm just afraid that the kid would refuse."

Guardian Wu smiled a little as he followed Gongson Chun Gi.

There was no way that was the case. The pope's the one that makes decisions. And the child would definitely not refuse.

Think about it. How could you refuse, when a person offered you money and fame?

'Hehe, if there's a person like that, he'd have to be either crazy or insane.'

Unfortunately, the boy they were meeting seemed to be either one of those two.

“I find you quite interesting, how about you?”

Cho Ryu Hyang was unable to figure out what the pope meant. When he made a confused expression, Gongson Chun Gi scratched his cheeks and talked.

“Well? Do you want to try being my disciple? I’m Gongson Chun Gi, the pope of the Heavenly Demon Church, by the way.”

Cho Ryu Hyang answered Gongson Chun Gi without even a hint of hesitation.

“No.”

“.....Really.”

“.....Why? Why don’t you want to?”

Guardian Wu left the pope behind and grabbed onto Cho Ryu Hyang’s hands. He looked into the boy’s face with a desperate expression.

“Is it because of the rumors about the church in the martial world? Don’t trust them, young lord. They’re all fake.”

Cho Ryu Hyang made a troubled face. He didn't know why this bearlike elder was being so lively here, but the old man's actions here was just bothering him.

“I.....”

Right when he was about to speak, Guardian Wu started talking again.

“This is a once-in-a-lifetime chance. If you become the heir to the church, you'll be able to control 100,000 followers of the church with the tip of your hands. If you want, you can have a giant feast for yourself every day, and you can acquire anything you ever wished for. How is it?”

“I.....”

When Cho Ryu Hyang was about to speak, Guardian Wu yet again cut the boy off.

“It seems that the young lord hasn't seen the tremendous power of the church yet, but.....”

“Stop, you idiotic fool. You're starting to say some inappropriate stuff. To a child.”

Gongson Chun Gi pulled back the old man, who was talking non-

stop in front of Cho Ryu Hyang., and apologized.

“Sorry. This old man’s quite immature. He troubled you quite a bit. Please understand.”

“Please reconsider. Something like this won’t ever happen again in your lifetime.”

“I told you before, don’t you remember? You can take a cattle to the river, but you can’t force it to drink. A person mustn’t try to create a relationship that’s bound to not work out. Don’t you think so?”

Cho Ryu Hyang nodded. Looking at that, Gongson Chun Gi made a regretful face, but soon shook his head.

“I respect your decision. Since unlike this old man, I’m a responsible adult. But I do have to leave you with an offer.”

Gongson Chun Gi spoke whilst looking at Cho Ryu Hyang.

“If your mind ever changes, just tell me. You can tell me while you are here, or even after you leave this place. I’m a patient person, so I can wait.”

Guardian Wu thought that that last part was just a big fat lie, but he didn’t say it out loud. He just started punching his chest in frustration.

Cho Ryu Hyang, who was looking at the old man, spoke. It seemed that he finally got a chance to speak up.

“It’s a proposal I am thankful for, but I already have a teacher.”

Gongson Chun Gi’s eyes widened.

“You refused me because of that?”

“Yes. A person must never take on two teachers, after all.”

When Cho Ryu Hyang said this, Guardian Wu’s face brightened considerably. He looked at the pope with eyes filled with respect.

“Your holiness is indeed amazing. You were able to predict all this. This is really amazing.”

“It’s good that you know.”

“Isn’t this case closed, then?”

“Yep.”

Cho Ryu Hyang made a confused face when he heard this conversation. He didn’t understand what was going on.

While Gongson Chun Gi was trying to think about what he should say next, Guardian Wu spoke to Cho Ryu Hyang with a smile.

“We already got permission from your teacher. The young lord doesn’t have to worry about that, hoho.”

“.....!”

Gongson Chun Gi’s face twisted a little when he saw Cho Ryu Hyang’s face change. It was too late to fix anything now.

‘This darned old man.....’

Gongson Chun Gi glared at Guardian Wu with murderous eyes, then spoke.

“We’ve made a mistake. You should’ve heard this from your teacher first, but it seems that the order got reversed. We got too rushed on our side.”

Cho Ryu Hyang’s face shook noticeably. Gongson Chun gi, who was observing the boy’s face, kept talking.

“Don’t go on thinking that your teacher abandoned you. He treasured you so much, that he made this painful decision, believing that it would be good for you. That’s why he agreed to all this.”

“.....”

It felt like he was hit with a jackhammer. Cho Ryu hyang rubbed his eyes a little. What did they just say? Did he listen correctly?

“It looks like we really came at a bad time. How about talking again after you go meet up with your teacher?”

“.....Yes. Let's.”

He had to talk with his teacher first. It felt like he could be able to accept all this after talking about why his teacher made this decision.

“Well, things ended up like this because of that. I apologize.”

Jo Gi Chun looked at Gongson Chun Gi, who had visited him while he was observing the formation, and sighed. It seemed that it was an accident. And he was apologizing, too. After listening to everything, it seemed that he too, had to take some responsibility.

“I'll go talk to the boy.”

“Could you?”

Jo Gi Chun nodded, and went to the room that his disciple was in. Cho Ryu Hyang was waiting for him. The boy, who had prepared some tea on a small table, stood up when he saw his teacher enter and proceeded with the formalities.

“Teacher.”

“Yes. Let’s sit.”

“Yes.”

Jo Gi Chun sat down on the spot where Cho Ryu Hyang was sitting, and poured some tea for himself.

“I heard that the order of events have been switched. Even so, the end result shouldn’t be too different.”

“.....Teacher.”

This felt ominous. When Cho Ryu Hyang made a dark face, Jo Gi Chun spoke.

“I’ve been thinking since a long time back. If something good happened to you in the future, I would let you go. And that just happened to happen here.”

“.....”

“But it seemed that human greed was really a scary thing.”

Jo Gi Chun finished pouring tea for himself, and looked at Cho Ryu Hyang. A while later, he spoke.

“It wasn’t easy to let you go. Even now, I can’t really accept it. But I know that’s just a product of my greed.”

“.....”

“I can’t turn back from the path of mathematics now, but you’re different. You still have plenty of chances.”

Cho Ryu Hyang stared at his teacher’s face. Jo Gi Chun too, gazed upon the boy.

How long did they look at each other? Cho Ryu Hyang’s face changed quite a bit during that span of time. At first, a surprised face, then a regretful one. And the face at last settled on an emotionless expression.

Cho Ryu Hyang began talking slowly.

“Teacher is..... very selfish.”

“.....”

“Even when you say that you are doing this for me, it still sounds selfish. Teacher knows what I want, and what I want to do, more so than anyone else in the world, don’t you?”

He did.

More than anyone.

But that’s why he felt that he had to give up on the boy. He couldn’t have a boy with this much talent tied down by math. That would make him truly selfish.

“Yes, like you said, I am a selfish man. I’ve lived that way till now. I have never regretted any of decisions, nor have I ever looked back at anything.”

“.....”

He even ignored his family out of selfishness.

When he thought that much, Jo Gi Chun made a bitter face.

“But the moment I said that I would give you up to the pope of the church, I’ve regretted my decision. Even now, I regret saying that.”

Jo Gi Chun put the teacup to his mouth. His trembling hand clearly showed how much he regretted his decision.

“I don’t know if you believe me, but I think I will continue regretting this. But even if I do, I won’t think that I’ve done a bad thing. Indeed, like you said, I must be quite selfish.”

Cho Ryu Hyang stayed silent when he saw his teacher’s trembling hand. He was able to see that his teacher didn’t make this choice easily.

Because he was his teacher. Because he knew what his teacher was like. As they talked with each other, Cho Ryu Hyang was able to realize that his teacher made a difficult decision.

But so what?

Just what does that change?

His teacher was trying to send him away. Even though his teacher doesn’t want it, he is trying to push away his only disciple. Since his teacher treasured Cho Ryu Hyang very much, the teacher’s mind wouldn’t change.

‘What should I do?’

Cho Ryu Hyang asked himself a question.

But he didn’t really need to do so. He didn’t want to leave his teacher. How should he make it so that he didn’t have to leave his

teacher, then?

As much as Jo Gi Chun loved his disciple, Cho Ryu Hyang respected his teacher. Cho Ryu Hyang also knew that there was no one else like his teacher in the world, a person who understood Cho Ryu Hyang to that degree.

‘I like math.’

No, to be specific, he liked studying mathematics with his teacher. It was like that in the past, the present, and it wouldn’t ever change in the future.

He couldn’t abandon his teacher, who he could learn from, and share discoveries with.

That was his conclusion.

Cho Ryu Hyang looked at his teacher again. He could see his teacher, who possessed eyes of firm determination. Cho Ryu Hyang’s face slowly wrinkled when he saw it.

‘This won’t do.’

His teacher wouldn’t take it. His teacher had a look of determination in his eyes, and through it, one could see that the man didn’t make this choice for mere comfort. The man made this choice, firmly believing that Cho Ryu Hyang would benefit from this.

That just served to make Cho Ryu Hyang want to stay with his teacher more. It was because

he could feel how much his teacher cared for Cho Ryu Hyang's future. What kind of a disciple would leave a teacher like that?

Cho Ryu Hyang organized his thoughts, and spoke.

“Teacher said that you were a selfish man. I don't know if that's true, but teacher can continue living the way you did. I too, will live selfishly from now.”

Jo Gi Chun closed his eyes. Good. It seemed that his disciple understood his intentions, one way or the other.

It hurt him to see the cold eyes of his disciple, but didn't he brace himself for that already? There was no need for him to be sad, or regretful about all this.

When he set his mind on this, his disciple opened his mouth.

“I know you're trying to give me up for my sake. Since I understand your purpose, I will comply with your wishes.”

“.....Good.”

“Will you listen to the choice I've made, then?”

“Don’t you already know what I want you to do?”

Cho Ryu Hyang fixed his glasses.

And spoke.

“I want to follow your decision, and my wishes as well. As you know, I am a realist.”

Jo Gi Chun stared at his disciple.

Cho Ryu Hyang smiled.

“And I’m quite greedy as well.”

Humans can’t live greedily, doing whatever they want. But Cho Ryu Hyang right now was going to be greedy.

“I’m going to take on two teachers now. I hope you would agree with my wishes.”

It was a foolish request. But this was the best Cho Ryu Hyang could come up with at the time.

“Do you truly believe that the pope will agree to this?”

“I’ll make him.”

Cho Ryu Hyang smiled.

After having Jo Gi Chun agree to his plan somewhat, Cho Ryu Hyang began thinking. He had to get the pope to agree to this. Otherwise, his beloved teacher might leave him. Cho Ryu Hyang wanted to avoid that at all costs.

Chapter 23. Scalawag Guardians

Gongson Chun Gi massaged his head, and a painful moan came out of his throat.

“Why’re you here?”

“.....I heard Your Holiness was in danger.....”

“Me? Who said that?”

The wrinkly old man. He was one of the 8 guardians of the church, the harmonious expert Ju Sang San. He sweated a bit and started glancing towards Guardian Wu. Seeing that, Gongson Chun Gi glared at Guardian Wu.

“Oho, so that old man called you over.”

Guardian Ju started to nod vigorously. Guardian Wu frantically began trying to explain himself with a pale face.

“Your Holiness, this is a misunderstanding. I told him this before I left the church.....”

“Misunderstanding my ass. Are you trying to start a war with all these people? Do you really want to see a bloodbath?”

Guardian Wu and Guardian Ju. The two bowed down fearfully.

That was because Gongson Chun Gi had left his usual playful attitude behind, and was raging at the old man.

Guardian Ju, a member of the fifteen guests known as the Blood Sound Demon (血音魔君). The reason Gongson Chun Gi was angry wasn't just because he came here. If Guardian Ju had come alone, Gongson Chun Gi would've greeted him happily.

But the problem was, he didn't come alone. He brought two of the ten martial groups inside the Heavenly Demon Church.

Guardian Wu brought 500 of the strongest experts, the Blood Wolf Corps. Guardian Ju brought the Wind Demon Corps (風魔隊) and the Yama Corps (閻羅隊), which totaled 4000 men. If you would add the 500 experts stationed in the Gansu branch, the grand total of the martial artists currently in the Gansu branch would become an astonishing amount of 5000 men.

The Gansu branch obviously couldn't house that many people. Because of that, they had to set up tents to accommodate the experts.

“The boys in the Blood Wolf Corps are good, but since they're a small group, wouldn't it be hard to fight the Alliance?”

When Guardian Ju said this with a cautious voice, Gongson Chun Gi wrinkled his face.

“If it was then, we could've avoided the whole battle to begin

with. But not now.”

Since the men at the Blood Wolf Corps were the elites of the church, they could easily get themselves out of a tight situation. Even if they were stuck in an extremely dangerous area, they would get out without much injury.

But when the Wind Demon Corps and the Yama Corps, both weaker than the Blood Wolf Corps, join in, the whole story would be different. Their mobility would obviously decrease.

“.....Is there no choice other than to spill blood..”

Gongson Chun Gi had to abandon the idea of running away. His face stiffened. He didn't want to fight, but only on the condition that they would suffer no injuries. He had no desire to avoid a fight by giving up their own flesh and blood.

The fact that the church had to go into a battle with the Alliance bothered Gongson Chun Gi greatly.

“First secretary (一秘), are you there?”

“Yes, Your Holiness.”

“Come in.”

Um Seung Do entered the meeting room politely. Looking at Um

Seung Do, Gongson Chun Gi spoke.

“You said they would move in about four days?”

“Yes.”

“By the time everyone gathers on both sides, who would have the advantage?”

Um Seung Do cautiously asked a question.

“Do I have to put Your Holiness and the chief of the Alliance into the equation?”

Gongson Chun Gi shook his head.

“Nope, exclude me and him.”

“Then the church would have a 30% higher chance of victory against the Alliance.”

“Damn, so it’s just 30%.....”

Gongson Chun Gi made a depressed expression. A lot of people were going to die here. It would be a different story if they had an absolute advantage against the enemy, but they didn’t. Both sides would suffer from great losses in this case.

“Is there any chance that they would retreat?”

Um Seung Do hesitated a little at this question. He didn't know what kind of an answer the Pope wanted. Because of that, Um Seung Do tried to be as cautious as possible as he answered the question.

“Unless they lose most of their men, they won't retreat.”

“Damn it.....”

“According to what this one found out, Baek Mu Ryang had made the information about the Moon Edge Blade Technique public.”

“What? Why?”

“I believe that he's trying to use it as an incentive.”

“That old dog's determined to fight us, huh.”

The price of a martial arts technique in the martial world was immense. Especially a martial arts technique that had the capability to shake the world. When a martial arts technique of that much value appeared, every martial artist in the world would try to get it using any means possible.

Gongson Chun Gi pressed down on his aching temples, and

spoke.

“By the way, how long would it take for the formation to be undone?”

“He said it would take about ten days.”

“Too slow.”

“That’s the best he could do. Actually, he’s not sure if he could even do it in ten days..”

“Damn it. Nothing’s going right.”

The battle would happen in four days. That would mean that the church would have to hold on for seven whole days. Just how should the church accomplish that?

‘Should we just go crush them?’

If he just followed his personality, he would’ve done that a long time ago. But he couldn’t do it. If he did that, something that he didn’t want to see happen the most would happen. A lot of people would die if he did it.

While Gongson Chun Gi was trying to think of some kind of a solution, Um Seung Do spoke up.

“Your Holiness.”

“What?”

“Lord Cho Ryu Hyang wishes to see you.”

“Now?”

“Yes. He wanted to meet you as soon as possible.”

“He must’ve made his choice.”

Gongson Chun Gi nodded. Come to think of it, nothing good happened since he came here.

Except for meeting the boy. That was the only good thing that had happened to him so far. When he thought that much, his terrible mood lightened a bit.

“Where is he?”

“He is residing in the cabin at the back.”

“Good. Ah! You guys don’t have to follow me.”

“Yes.”

When Gongson Chun Gi went outside the meeting room, Guardian Wu and Guardian Ju both sighed in relief.

Immediately after that, Guardian Wu began to growl at Guardian Ju.

“Stupid old man! Why’d you sell me out?”

“Wasn’t it true, though?”

When Guardian Ju said this, Guardian Wu’s face started to look more and more dangerous.

“Don’t you have any sense of loyalty at all?”

“Pah! To hell with loyalty. I want to live long. I’m still healthy, and I don’t want to get beat up to death by His Holiness.”

“Healthy my ass. Are you actually trying to live till you become an useless old man?”

“Of course I am.”

Guardian Wu and Guardian Ju.

They were old rivals, as well as friends.

After fighting each other like that for a while, they looked down at their wrinkly hands and grinned.

“Kuhehe. It took me thirty years to get myself all the way here. I’m definitely going to live long and witness the world that His Holiness will create. I can’t die before that. Um. I definitely can’t.”

One could feel quite a bit of determination in that voice.

Looking at Guardian Ju, Guardian Wu spoke with a sad face.

“.....Senile old man. Are you really still saying that? His Holiness has no intention of going out into the martial world. He decided that years ago. Don’t you know about that?”

“Hehe, you dumbass. That’s why you’re so lacking all the time.”

“What? D..Dumbass?”

“Yeah, dumbass. You stayed next to His Holiness for that long, and you still don’t know what he’s like?”

“I don’t know His Holiness? This Wu Gyu Ho?”

Guardian Ju.

He thought of something from the past, and spoke.

“It’s not like you’d know about something just because you were next to it for a long time. Don’t you know His Holiness’ holding it in desperately, even now?”

“Hold in what?”

“Did you forget what kind of a martial art His Holiness practiced? It was a demonic art that requires one to kill a person every day.”

“You dumb idiot. Don’t you know that the His Holiness overcame that years ago? Hah... This is why a person needs to die when they get old.”

“Fufu. You’ll see soon enough.”

Looking at Guardian Ju, who had a mysterious smile on his face, Guardian Wu’s eyes began to narrow.

“You... This is suspicious. Did you bring all these boys here, even though you knew everything? To make His Holiness fight?”

“Fufu, you figured it out? You’re not just an idiot, huh.”

“You.....”

Guardian Wu grabbed Guardian Ju's shoulders violently.

“You did something good for once. Good job, you bastard! Puhahaha!”

“This is what they call the wisdom of life. Kuhahahaha!”

The two old friends looked at each other, and laughed.



Um Seung Do, who had been hiding in the room all this time, felt that this wasn't the place for him and tried to sneak out.

Did that tick them off?

Guardian Ju called out to Um Seung Do.

“Yo, Seung Do.”

“Ye, yes! Sir.”

“You asked His Holiness a silly question a while ago.”

A silly question? What was it?

While Um Seung Do was trying to look over the previous situation, Guardian Ju spoke.

“You asked him if you should exclude him and the Chief of the Alliance, I believe?”

“Ah!”

He remembered that question. But just what was wrong about it?

Guardian Ju spoke after reading Um Seung Do’s face.

“Don’t you know what the problem is?”

“I do realize that His Holiness is stronger than the Chief of the Alliance, but.....”

But that was just a prediction made by the church. Even though he did believe in the power of the church, but since he mainly dealt

with information as a job, he usually had to suspect everything unless it was certain.

“His Holiness is on an entirely different level.”

Guardian Ju spoke whilst having his arms folded together.

“You said the church held a 30% advantage over the enemy before?”

“Yes.”

“Is it accurate?”

When Guardian Ju asked this, Um Seung Do answered back with a slightly offended expression.

“Yes.”

“Hoh? Then what do you think would happen if His Holiness and the Alliance’s Chief entered the fray?”

“That is.....”

Um Seung Do began thinking.

Even though His Holiness was quite strong, the Alliance’s chief

wasn't an easy foe. They were both a part of the three sovereigns, after all. So what would happen if they both entered the battle? Nothing would change, right?

“100%.”

Guardian Wu, who had been staying quiet all this while, opened his mouth.

“What?”

“It's 100%.”

Um Seung Do opened his mouth, then closed it again. What? It's not even a 90%, but a full 100%? That would mean that the church would have no casualties at all, but was that even possible to begin with?

It seemed that these old men had a bit too much loyalty in them. They had to look at situations like these as coldly as possible..... Um Seung Do's eyes began to show a tinge of disappointment.

“Don't go off ignoring what we said, now. Well, it shouldn't matter, though. You'll see soon enough.”

“That's true.”

When Um Seung Do saw the two old men, who were glancing at

each other with a smile, his face began to get complicated. It seemed that they knew something about His Holiness that he didn't know about.

‘What would that be?’

As a person who handled information, not being able to predict the power of his own allies and the enemies was a critical problem.

‘We'll see what happens, damned elders.’

He couldn't figure out what was going to happen in the future right now. There were too many variables in play. At times like these, it was better to just try to crush the enemy with pure force, rather than to try to come up with a decent strategy.

‘The Alliance/Demon War.....’

Um Seung Do felt his blood boil when he thought about the war. After all, he too was a martial artist.

There hadn't been anything as big as this recently. Just what would happen? Um Seung Do forcefully tried to cool his head as he stared out the window.

Then, Guardian Ju opened his mouth with a confused expression.

“By the way, just who is His Holiness meeting here? Was he called Cho Ryu Hyang? Who’s that kid supposed to be?”

“Uh? Come to think of it, you don’t know about it yet, huh....”

“About what?”

“The disciple that His Holiness is taking in is Cho Ryu Hyang.”

Guardian Ju’s movements stopped for a split second. He then widened his wrinkly eyes and shouted.

“W, what? Disciple? His Holiness?”

“Yeah, a disciple.”

“Why’d you tell me that now?! You goddamned old man!”

“Ah, I forgot.....”

Guardian Wu couldn’t say anything else.

That was because Guardian Ju was already gone.

Chapter 24. The Young Lord Of The Heavenly Demon Church

“It’s raining.”

Gongson Chun Gi stared up at the sky, and muttered.

[This one will go get a coat as fast as I can.]

“Don’t. It would just be a waste of time.”

After saying that, Gongson Chun Gi began to walk amongst the silver slivers of water mindlessly. Not even the rain from the sky could wet him.

There was an invisible shell that surrounded his entire body. A person that surpassed human limits. That was the pope of the Heavenly Demon Church, Gongson Chun Gi.

“Gyum.”

[Yes, your holiness.]

“You’ll have to stay outside. No need to have you get shamed.”

Gyum couldn’t really believe the pope’s words, but who was he to disobey? Lim Hak Gyum hid himself behind a pillar, and stationed

himself there. Then, Gongson Chun Gi massaged his shoulders and spoke.

“If I just walk out later without a word, just follow me and don’t ask any questions.”

[Of course.]

“Damn it, to think just getting a disciple would be this hard.”

After complaining in a small voice, Gongson Chun Gi opened the door and entered.

“You waited for me?”

Looking at all this from the back, Lim Hak Gyum smiled. His holiness always looked outgoing and relaxed.

But it seemed that when it came to mental stress people had with disciples, he was the same as everyone. This was something unfamiliar, but it was something good to see. Lim Hak Gyum always looked at Gongson Chun Gi with reverence and respect.

“That’s it? There aren’t any other conditions?”

“.....Yes.”

“That’s not very bad. Well, we’ll go with what you want.”

Cho Ryu Hyang was getting confused, because the pope agreed to this too quickly.

The Pope had an unflustered reaction. Cho Ryu Hyang put away all the plans he had in mind to persuade the pope, and stayed quiet for a while. Soon, he asked a question.

“Just what is it that you like about me?”

Gongson Chun Gi smirked at Cho Ryu Hyang’s question.

“What? You want me to confess my love to you, now? That’s embarrassing.”

Cho Ryu Hyang didn’t react to Gongson Chun Gi’s joke, and kept a straight face. That was because he couldn’t really understand this whole situation.

The Pope looked like he would agree to any condition as long as Cho Ryu Hyang became his disciple.

It wasn’t very believable.

‘No one ever does anything for someone that much without a motive.’

No, something like that did indeed happen. The love a parent shows to their child. Cho Ryu Hyang believed that nothing in the world was free, other than that.

“You weren’t very attractive to me in the beginning. But once I realized your true value, I changed my mind.”

Gongson Chun Gi stopped there. He then spoke with a serious face.

“Anyways, you were truthful about becoming my disciple?”

“.....Yes.”

It was the truth.

The Pope of the Heavenly Demon Church. This was a chance to become the heir to the church. It would be a lie if Cho Ryu Hyang said he wasn’t tempted to become the heir.

“I’ll give you one last chance. If you don’t want to do this, now’s the time to run.”

Cho Ryu Hyang looked at Gongson Chun Gi. Unlike what he had said earlier, Gongson Chun Gi’s eyes looked quite shaken. The man was regretting what he said just now quite a lot, it seemed.

Cho Ryu Hyang smiled when he saw that.

“I will never run. Neither now nor the future.”

Gongson Chun Gi took a look at Cho Ryu Hyang’s face, and made an embarrassed face/

“.....Did I look anxious, by any chance?”

“Yes.....”

“.....A lot?”

“Yes.....”

“Well, shit.”

Cho Ryu Hyang stared at the complaining man in front of him.

He didn’t know if the Pope was acting all this out or not, but the Pope’s reactions still eased his mind a little.

“Hey, promise me something.”

“Okay.”

“The moment you go out, you’ll be my disciple. That means that you’ll have to start thinking highly of yourself.”

What does that mean?

“You asked me earlier, right? What I liked about you?”

“Yes.”

“To be honest, I was ready to agree to any condition that you’d throw at me. That’s how much you’re worth.”

Wasn’t the hope thinking too highly of Cho Ryu Hyang? The boy made an embarrassed face when a compliment came at him.

“You heard the rumors about me in the martial world, correct?”

“Yes.”

The strongest man under the heavens.

And the living god of the Heavenly Demon Church.

The rumors in the martial world hinted that the Pope was actually a being that resided in the heavens.

“This is a secret, but I’m actually even more amazing than the

rumors. I am indeed worthy of your respect.”

It was an extremely shameless and a brazen statement, but strangely, it didn't seem that out of place when the Pope said it.

While Cho Ryu Hyang showed a bit of a dumb face because of the previous statement. Gongson Chun Gi grabbed onto Cho Ryu Hyang's shoulders, and spoke.

“A great person like me chose you. So it's ok for you to be a little prideful.”

Did the Pope want to say that? Cho Ryu Hyang smiled, and nodded.

When Gongson Chun Gi saw that, he made a serious face and spoke.

“I'm not telling you this to make you feel good. Keep this in your mind. You're a person that I recognized. So don't go bowing down to anyone other than me. No, don't bow down, even to me. Do you understand what I'm saying?”

Cho Ryu Hyang, at that moment, had to redetermine his impression of the Pope. The Pope wasn't just a shameless person. He was prideful and ambitious, which was what made him say that.

Cho Ryu Hyang felt something right then. It was a feeling that

implied that perhaps he might actually come to respect the person in front of him someday.

Cho Ryu Hyang stared into Gongson Chun Gi's eyes, and spoke.

"I'll keep teacher's words in mind."

After hearing that, the stiff face of the Pope turned into a grin.

"I wanted to hear that."

Gongson Chun Gi pat the boy's back, and spoke.

"Congratulations on becoming my disciple."

"Thank you. Teacher."

"The proper ceremony will take place once we get to the main church, but you will be regarded as a heir to the church from now on. Because of that, you'll be treated accordingly."

Be treated accordingly? What did that exactly mean?

When Cho Ryu Hyang made a curious face, Gongson Chun Gi grinned.

"You'll see soon enough."

It took Cho Ryu Hyang less than an hour till he understood what the Pope meant.

Gongson Chun Gi looked at the figure outside the door, and smirked.

That was because Guardian Ju was standing next to Lim Hak Gyum with an anxious face.

Guardian Ju rushed out the moment Gongson Chun Gi walked out the door.

“Is that boy..... No, is he your Holiness’s disciple?”

“Yes. He’s my disciple.”

“Oh! Finally!”

Leaving Guardian Ju, who had an ecstatic expression on his face, behind, Gongson Chun Gi began thinking about something else entirely.

‘This is the start.’

What should he teach his disciple? It seemed that the boy didn’t

know a single thing about martial arts..... Gongson Chun Gi began to list out all the martial arts that he knew in his brain.

Guardian Ju came to his senses at that point. After looking at the cabin next to him for a moment, he slipped away. He had to be somewhere else.

“Young lord, this is Um Seung Do.”

“Yes, please come in.”

The door opened, and Um Seung Do walked in respectfully. The moment he saw Cho Ryu Hyang, he dropped down onto his knees.

When Cho Ryu Hyang widened his eyes in surprise, Um Seung Do spoke.

“I heard that you became the heir of the church.”

“Ah.....Yes.”

Rumors spread fast, it seemed. When Cho Ryu Hyang thought that, Um Seung Do bowed down to Cho Ryu Hyang.

“Please forgive this one’s crimes up till now, young lord!”

“.....”

How should he respond to this? While Cho Ryu Hyang was acting a bit troubled over this, Um Seung Do began to talk with a determined face.

“If you want, I will pay for it with my life.”

Cho Ryu Hyang slowly opened his mouth when he saw that Um Seung Do was actually prepared to take his own life.

“.....I really can't get used to this.”

Was this the so-called way of the martial artists? It was true that Cho Ryu Hyang didn't really know what he should do when he looked at Um Sung Do. He thought that he would just have to get used to it, but it seemed that that wouldn't really work out.

What should he do, then? Honestly, he didn't really have to think of anything. There was an easy solution to all this.

Cho Ryu Hyang sighed, and opened his mouth.

“I'll forget about everything that happened before. So you can stop. Please stand.”

“.....”

Um Seung Do didn't even twitch.

He seemed immovable.

Just what did he not like?

When Cho Ryu Hyang was about to ask that question, Um Seung Do spoke.

“You can act as you want, young lord.”

“.....”

“There is no need to act politely to any of us in the future. There is no need to ask us to do anything. Just command us. You have the right to do that.”

Cho Ryu Hyang closed his mouth. When he heard Um Seung Do's words, he realized just what kind of a choice he had made a while ago.

The heir to the church.

It was one of the biggest positions one could get in the martial world.

Cho Ryu Hyang, who was in a dazed state for a brief moment,

looked at Um Seung Do, who was still bowing at him, with a complicated face. He slowly opened his mouth.

“You may..... stand.”

To think commanding someone would be this awkward.

Um Seung Do stood up with frightening speed. And spoke.

“Is there anything else the young lord would like?”

“There is..... nothing.”

Um Seung Do lightly bowed with a polite expression. After that, he opened his mouth to say something.

“The elder wishes to meet the young lord. I’ve been ordered to escort you to him.”

“The elder?”

“Yes. He is one of the eight guardians of the church, elder Ju Sang San.”

Cho Ryu Hyang nodded.

“When do we leave?”

“Now would be the perfect time.”

What was going on?

Cho Ryu Hyang felt a bit suspicious, but he still stood up.

“I will guide the young lord.”

When Cho Ryu Hyang followed Um Seung Do, he was able to see an auditorium far away.

‘What’s this?’

For some strange reason, his heart was beating quite loudly. It felt like something big was about to happen.

Cho Ryu Hyang entered the auditorium with a strange feeling. There, he saw.

He saw the reason why everyone in the world feared the Heavenly Demon Church. A part of that reason was awaiting him.

It was a giant auditorium.

However, the whole place was packed. A total of 5000 people. Everyone in the Gansu branch of the church was waiting here

silently.

A breathtaking feeling of solitude.

Cho Ryu Hyang walked up to the pedestal, guided by Um Seung Do.

While Cho Ryu Hyang was looking at these people with a dumb face, Um Seung Do came up next to Cho Ryu Hyang and looked at the people down below.

He then gathered energy from the pit of his stomach, and shouted.

“Heavenly Demon Bow! (天魔仰伏)”

The moment Um Seung Do’s roar rang across the auditorium, the people in the auditorium all simultaneously put their feet together, and knelt down.

Koom–!

A vibration, resembling that of an earthquake, shook the auditorium. After that, they all paused a bit, then shouted.

“The Godly Church Under The Heavens! (神教天下)”

Cho Ryu Hyang opened his mouth.

A shout that made his hair tremble.

It was his first time seeing this many people gathered in one place, and the aura exuded by each of them was really no joke. It was absolutely breathtaking.

‘This is.....’

It wasn’t a bad feeling. He was surprised by how excited he felt when he stood in front of all these people.

A pool of spit gathered in his mouth, and his body started to get hot. This whole thing was an experience that he couldn’t really put to words.

“Everyone here are the people that will follow the young lord in the future. Please look after them.”

Two old men, one wrinkly, and one big, could be seen next to him. When Cho Ryu Hyang looked at them, the wrinkly old man introduced himself.

“The name’s Ju Sang San, young lord. I wasn’t able to prepare much because of the time. Forgive me.....”

“.....”

Since he didn't know the manners of the church yet, it was kind of awkward for him to speak. Guardian Ju stepped back, as if he realized that.

“If you were surprised by this, I apologize.”

“No, there is no need to apologize. You should've at least done this much, after all.”

When Cho Ryu Hyang turned his head, he could see Gongson Chun Gi approaching him with a smile.

“Were you surprised? By just this much?”

How could he not be surprised? Gongson Chun Gi pat Cho Ryu Hyang's hair a bit, and stood on the center of the pedestal as if this was the most natural thing he could do in the world.

Once he stood in the center, everything went quiet. After taking in the silence a bit, Gongson Chun Gi looked at the 5000 martial artists standing there in rows.

He slowly opened his mouth.

“A heir to the church has been decided.”

A tiny whisper. But there wasn't anyone in the auditorium, who

was unable to hear these words. After saying that, he put Cho Ryu Hyang, who still had a shocked look on his face, in front of him.

“This boy’s the one who will take care of the church for the next hundred years. What do you think of him?”

Uwaaaaa-!

The whole area was engulfed with shouts.

This was the first meeting between Cho Ryu Hyang, who would be known as King Shura in the future, and the Heavenly Demon Church, which would be known as the Absolute Religion (絶代神教).



Chapter 25. The Hidden Truth

The Chasing Blood Demon, Sang Dong Ha.

He was a member of the 15 guests, and was also the strongest member of the Dark Moon Guild. Right now, he was in a confused state.

“Who did you say you came here to meet?”

“Grandpa.”

“The Night Emperor?”

“Yes.”

Sang Dong Ha sweated a bit when he heard Neng Ha Young’s calm reply.

The Night Emperor? What was this nonsense? Didn’t the man go into hiding a long time ago?

“Didn’t you come here because of what’s going on in the Qilian mountains?”

Neng Ha Young simply stared at Sang Dong Ha.

“Why would I come all the way here for that?”

“Because.....”

Elder Sang Dong Ha couldn't say anything. She was right. There was no reason for her to come here. And right now, that wasn't the real problem here.

“So, did you meet him?”

Neng Ha Young didn't answer the elder's question. She simply smiled, and looked behind Sang Dong Ha. Elder Sang Dong Ha, when he saw the girl's actions, felt a cold chill run down his spine.

When he slowly looked behind himself, he could see an old man leaning on a table. A seemingly ordinary old man, who didn't really exude any kind of aura.

But the moment their eyes met, Elder Sang Dong Ha froze like a frog that encountered a snake.

‘Just when?’

Elder Sang Dong Ha never allowed anyone to get behind his back, once he had become a harmonious expert.

But there were always exceptions. Especially when it came to the old man in front of his eyes.

“It’s been a while.”

“S, sir.”

Elder Sang Dong Ha stumbled backwards with a pale face. He soon realized just what he was doing, and quickly greeted the old man.

“Elder Sang Dong Ha greets the manager.”

“Manager, yeah right. You’re being too polite to a retired person.”

A completely white hair, combined with a pair of bored eyes. This was one of the three sovereigns in the martial world, the one known as the messenger of death, the Night Emperor Neng Mu Gi.

“You look well, Sang Dong Ha.”

“I, it’s all thanks to you worrying about me this much.”

Sang Dong Ha was looking at Neng Mu Gi with a timid face. He let out a suppressed moan, and ground his teeth. The old monster here didn’t change at all from the past. It was still strong.

And that unique presence. That presence of the old man, which was being exuded out the body like mist, was pressuring Sang

Dong Ha greatly.

“Did you come here because of the Heavenly Demon Church?”

So he knew?

Sang Dong Ha carefully answered with an anxious face.

“.....Yes.”

“You made a wrong move.”

“What?”

When Sang Dong Ha made a confused face, Neng Mu Gi took a seat and spoke.

“I said you made a bad choice.”

“What does that mean.....”

“Why did you come here?”

“That’s.....”

When Elder Sang Dong Ha didn’t answer, Neng Mu Gi answered

the question for him.

“You came for the Moon Edge Blade Technique, I’ll bet.”

“Huk!”

How did he know? Especially when it was an information he acquired with great difficulty?

“An excessive greed can only bring harm, Sang Dong Ha.”

Sang Dong Ha bowed.

Neng Mu Gi always made the right decision. Not once did the man make a wrong choice, and not once did the man lie. But not this time.

‘It’s the Moon Edge Blade Technique! That legendary technique is at stake here!’

There are many martial artists that became famous in the martial world. But there are few that gets remembered for a hundred years. And out of all those famous experts, there’s one that stands out the most: The Sword Devil, Ak Jung Pae.

The ridiculous sword technique he showed the world. That technique was still known as the strongest sword technique to date. How could Sang Dong Ha give up on that? Even if that

technique resided in the pits of hell, he would still jump down without a moment's hesitation.

“It looks like you aren't willing to give up.”

“.....”

It seemed that greed sometimes brought courage to people. If Neng Mu Gi told Sang Dong Ha this in the past, Sang Dong Ha would've given up immediately. But not now.

‘I'm not the me from the past.’

Sang Dong Ha, whilst sweating profusely, never said that he would go back. Neng Mu Gi, after observing Sang Dong Ha's attitude with a dull face, said something.

“It wouldn't be too bad for you to be greedy, for once.”

Sang Dong Ha's face brightened considerably. It seemed that Neng Mu Gi agreed with his decision.

“Thank you.”

Neng Mu Gi looked at Sang Dong Ha with a calm face, and opened his mouth.

“Be careful of the Heavenly Demon Church.”

“Yessir.”

Sang Dong Ha would've been careful of them, even without Neng Mu Gi's warning. Even though the Black Moon Guild was quite big, their inner framework wasn't set properly, unlike the one of the Heavenly Demon Church. Sang Dong Ha knew that well.

“I warned you.”

Sang Dong Ha smiled faintly. It seemed that even an old monster turns tame after a long time. Neng Mu Gi's warning only served to make Sang Dong Ha feel at ease.

Sang Dong Ha, satisfied with Neng Mu Gi's current self, quickly said his goodbyes.

“You must have a lot to talk about with your granddaughter. I will take my leave here.”

Neng Mu Gi didn't respond. Sang Dong Ha knew that was Neng Mu Gi's own way of giving permission to people. He quickly walked out the door.

Neng Ha Young, who was staying quiet all this time, opened her mouth.

“What does that mean, grandpa?”

Neng Mu Gi loosened his stiff face, and smiled a little.

“What does what mean?”

“The thing you said about being careful of the church.”

“It means exactly what it sounds like.”

Neng Mu Gi spoke while pouring some tea to his cup.

“That guy’s on the mountain.”

“That guy?”

“Gongson Chun Gi.”

The Pope of the Heavenly Demon Church.

He was here?

Neng Ha Young’s eyes sparkled when he got ahold of this information.

“The Pope? But the Dao Emperor from the Alliance is coming,

right?”

“That’s right.”

“Hm? This is the first time the three sovereigns actually got this close, right?”

Neng Mu Gi smiled.

“That is true, huh.”

“Right. Huh? Could it be, did grandpa meet the other sovereigns before?”

According to the official records, the three sovereigns never met each other face-to-face. All the ‘official’ records said that. This fact always managed to get on Neng Ha Young’s nerves.

‘They never met once for forty years?’

Forty years. That is not a short amount of time. Therefor, it was understandable for a person to become suspicious about it. Unless the three sovereigns all tried to steer clear away from each other, this feat was almost impossible.

Neng Ha Young researched this subject out of curiosity. She soon reached a conclusion. Surprisingly enough, it seemed that the three sovereigns didn’t avoid each other. It’s just that since each of

their territory was so different, they never really encountered each other.

There was never a case where, in the history of the martial world, great martial artists with different alliances didn't clash with each other. That alone made this case unprecedented.

Neng Ha Young found this relationship of the three sovereigns quite amazing. That's what made this so suspicious.

The three sovereigns. Did none of them ever wonder about the strength of the other sovereigns? They were, in the end, human. Did they really never get curious about others?

‘But.....’

If any one of them moved in to meet the sovereign from a different party, the balance between the three powers would've been broken. That was because a meeting between two sovereigns had to develop into a conflict. That was where Neng Ha Young got stuck.

Then, her grandfather, Neng Mu Gi, spoke.

“What do you think? Do you really think we never met each other?”

If they met each other before, one out of the original three would surely die. But that didn't happen. That's why Neng Ha Young

couldn't answer.

“I don't know, grandpa. Did you meet any of them before?”

Neng Mu Gi didn't answer, and just smiled. He was admitting something. Neng Ha Young narrowed her eyes. She was getting curious.

“How was it, grandpa?”

“What do you want to know?”

“I want to hear about how you felt.”

“You always want to know the most difficult things.”

“This has to do with why I visited you, grandpa.”

“The reason you visited me?”

“Yeah. I actually managed to get myself an annoying job.”

Neng Ha Young told her grandfather about the Martial World Sequence Records. Neng Mu Gi's face turned serious when he heard about it.

“The Martial World Sequence Records..... It is a dangerous

idea.”

“Really?”

Just what about it was dangerous?

While Neng Ha Young was trying to think of an answer, Neng Mu Gi sipped on his tea. And after thinking about something for a while, he began talking with a tone of hesitation, which was unusual for him.

“Right now, there are only two people who clearly know the rankings of the martial world.”

“Who’s that?”

“Me, and Gongson Chun Gi.”

Neng Ha Young paused a bit. She had felt that she missed something huge from her grandfather’s response.

‘What would that be?’

What did she miss? When she carefully went over her grandfather’s words again, a thought struck her mind. At the same time, Neng Ha Young trembled.

“G, grandpa, could it be?”

The Night Emperor, Neng Mu Gi.

He looked at his granddaughter and smiled.

The girl’s only flaw from the past was her own intelligence. She always managed to learn things better off not knowing. Because of that trait, Neng Mu Gi had no choice but to speak the truth.

“Right. I met all three of the sovereigns in the past.”

It was an unofficial meeting. And that meeting was the reason why Neng Mu Gi decided to go into hiding.

After observing the man’s face, Neng Ha young carefully opened her mouth.

“Could you perhaps tell me about it?”

Neng Mu Gi hesitated for a moment. He then spoke.

“Are you sure that you can take it?”

Neng Ha Young nodded with a serious face. Surely, this ‘secret’ of grandpa’s was a ‘truth’ no one else in the martial world knew about.



But that was why she wanted to know about it so badly. She knew that she could only survive in the martial world by relying on information.

And that hidden truth actually had a very clear, distinct form, unlike what Neng Ha Young had suspected.

Chapter 26. The Monster In The Formation

Jo Gi Chun was working on something with a serious face. There was brown clay in a basin. He had been kneading it since a while back, and was trying to make something.

After working with the clay for quite some time, Jo Gi Chun produced 5 clay statues of men on horses. Jo Gi Chun had a satisfied look on his face.

A horse rider. After looking at the 5 palm-sized figures carefully, he took out a small pouch.

Clatter–

The pouch was full of shiny black stones. They were obsidian. The rare gem that was produced in small amounts at the south. A single piece, no bigger than a fingernail, was worth five mansions. Jo Gi Chun's pouch was full of it.

“First, five.”

Jo Gi Chun muttered with a small voice, and picked out five pieces.

And with a needle that he had prepared a while back, he stabbed each of the fingers on his right hand once. Drops of blood came from each finger with a sting of pain.

Jo Gi Chun marked obsidian pieces with his blood. After marking them, he put each of the pieces into the clay figures. With that, the most basic preparation was completed.

“Shall I go in, then?”

Jo Gi Chun started off with the five clay figures. He was going to the tomb of Ak Jung Pae. To be more specific, he was going to the formation that surrounded the tomb.

Jo Gi Chun took a few deep breaths once he reached the tomb. Something like this took a lot of toll on his body because of his age, but he couldn't afford to do anything else. There wasn't any time.

‘Four days.....’

He had to show them some results before four days passed.

Jo Gi Chun walked up the mountain, then stopped. The place where stones with strange markings on them surrounded the area.

It would be dangerous to go any further. Right after this point would be the formation's area of influence. Jo Gi Chun observed the border of the formation carefully.

An expert.

When it came to formations, Jo Gi Chun was an expert.

That was why he could see the border of the formation clearly with his eyes. After looking at the border carefully, he took out the five clay figures he brought.

The borderline.

He put the clay figure on the line.

“Hoo.”

He had to be careful, from now on.

Jo Gi Chun slowly pushed the clay figures into the border. A moment later, the figures were all inside the formation.

Jo Gi Chun kneeled down, and put his right hand inside the border. He looked quite uncomfortable in that position. Unfortunately, he had to stay in that position. Until the first transformation took place, that is.

Thankfully, the first transformation took place quite soon. The five clay figures in the formation were trembling slightly.

Jo Gi Chun wrinkled his eyebrows when he saw that.

‘This is too fast.’

That wasn’t a good sign. The first transformation was taking place, even though it hasn’t even been that long since he pushed the figures inside.

Krrr–

The whole formation began to tremble. At the same time, the five clay figures in the formation began to get bigger. Jo Gi Chun was observing this with a careful face.

‘A formation is an artificial area created by bending the power of nature to a person’s will.’

The inside of a formation could be regarded as an entirely different world. That was why some supernatural things could take place inside naturally. Like now.

Neigh~

Five martial artists, each one of them seated on a horse. The clay figures that Jo Gi Chun brought had turned into human beings on horses in a moment inside the formation. They were currently looking at Jo Gi Chun, who was outside the formation, awaiting orders.

‘First, one.’

Jo Gi Chun pulled up his sleeve on his right arm. And with a face full of concentration, he moved his pinkie a tiny bit.

Then, the horseman on the far right began to move forward. Usually, once a formation was activated, you wouldn't be able to see the other side. After all, the insides of a formation and the outside world was two separate worlds.

But Jo Gi Chun, as mentioned before, was an expert when it came to formations. So he used some of his tricks to look inside. That trick of his would be the clay figures.

Jo Gi Chun's right hand was currently in the formation. Normally, when a person's body part was inside the formation, most formations would not activate. That was the basic condition.

But Jo Gi Chun had some agents to help him. The invincible agents that could take on any sort of danger. The five martial artists.

The clay figures, that used expensive obsidian as the core. They were moving inside the formation right now, like a real person. And Jo Gi Chun was able to feel the changes in the formation the clay figures would experience.

‘As expected, this is hard.’

Truthfully, the formation here was something Jo Gi Chun saw for the first time in his life.

The strange stones that were laid out outside the formation. The strange markings on the formations were old mathematical symbols, ones that barely anyone used in this day, which formed several complicated equations.

At first, Um Seung Do suspected that it would take Jo Gi Chun a long time to even solve the equations on the stones.

But that was a big misunderstanding. Jo Gi Chun solved the equations on the stones the moment he saw them.

But the problems started there. When Jo Gi Chun solved the equations on the stones, he could see that the equations explained what the formation does.

Someone, someone that had an incredible amount of confidence in his/her mathematical skills, set up a formation here. He even put the answers to undoing the formation with it.

Whoever made this had a lot of confidence. The thing was, Jo Gi Chun couldn't even decipher the formation, even with the answers on the stones. Jo Gi Chun knew what the formation did, and how it transformed, but he still couldn't break through the formation.

‘Only a martial artist can do this.’

How would he even undo a formation from the inside, if he wouldn't even be able to move?

Because of that, Jo Gi Chun was thinking of finding the trick to undo the formation and bring it back to the Heavenly Demon Church.

‘Mm?’

Jo Gi Chun's face began to get a little clouded. That was because he could feel an immense pressure as he went deeper into the formation.

If the pressure he was experiencing was this much, the clay figures were probably feeling an unbelievable amount of pressure. The figures weren't saying anything, and were trying their best to fulfill the mission Jo Gi Chun gave them. Especially the horseman on the far right. He was the one to reach the gate of the first trial.

‘An [Imugi](#) that could not become a dragon.....’

(TL: An [Imugi](#) is a “lesser dragon” that resembles a snake. Once it collects enough energy, it turns into a full fledged dragon.)

The first trial. He had to break through the Imugi that could not ascend, and enter. Like all other formations out there, it was using metaphors to describe the actual trial.

Jo Gi Chun saw the use of that sentence several times, when he was studying formations in the past. The formations that used that

metaphorical sentence were truly wild and violent. The descriptions were usually attached to formations that were designed for mass murder.

Because of that, Jo Gi Chun moved his pinky with great care. Then, the martial artist at the front hesitated a bit, then moved in.

Once it went inside, nothing really happened. The formation was tranquil, contrary to what Jo Gi Chun had suspected.

When Jo Gi Chun began feeling a little strange, something came out in front of his eyes.

Even before Jo Gi Chun realized what it was, he let out a painful moan.

“Keuk!”

It felt like his pinky was being ripped out of his hand. Jo Gi Chun endured the pain with his old body. He almost got his right hand out of the formation accidentally.

If he had pulled his hands out of the formation then, everything would’ve ended. Everything he prepared for this moment would’ve been useless.

‘Too close.’

Jo Gi Chun felt relieved, even with all the pain. He had managed to avoid a critical situation. And once his pain subsided quite a bit, he began to get suspicious.

The first trial. There was something in there that was capable of breaking a clay figure in an instant. As Jo Gi Chun didn't manage to see what it was, he naturally got curious.

‘Just what is it?’

Since he was looking inside the formation with a proxy, his reactions were obviously slower than normal. That's why he wasn't able to observe the thing inside the gate of the first trial very well.

‘What should I do.....’

Jo Gi Chun was in conflict. It wasn't like he would be able to see what was inside just by sending another one in. As long as he was able to confirm what was in the first trial, everything else would move on much easily.

After thinking for a long time, Jo Gi Chun finally made a decision.

‘I'll get everyone to go in at once.’

He didn't have confidence that one or two was going to do the trick.

The only sure way to find out was to take all four of the figures in to check.

Thinking that, Jo Gi Chun tapped the ground with his fingers, excluding his pinkie, with speed.

Tok tok tok tok–

Then, the four martial artists outside the gate began moving. Jo Gi Chun made up his mind as he watched them move.

He didn't know what was inside, but it was guaranteed that one or more of the martial artists would get destroyed in there. That would mean that he would have to go through the same pains he felt last time.

‘Would I be able to endure it?’

Jo Gi Chun had never trained his body in his life. He wasn't confident that he would be able to endure the pain that he went through just now.

But Jo Gi Chun soon became calm again. There wasn't anyone else that could do this, other than him. If someone had to do this, it would be him.

When he admitted that, his mind eased a bit. Right then, the four

martial artists reached the gate to the first trial.

‘I must send them in, all at the same time.’

Jo Gi Chun set up the clay figures carefully. And after preparing his mind for the worst, he pushed the four figures inside.

Like before, nothing happened the moment he put in the clay figures. This was the important part.

The four figures began to turn their heads to look at the surroundings. At the moment, however, Jo Gi Chun was immediately assaulted with immense pain.

Crumble—

Two clay figures got destroyed in an instant.

‘Keuk!’

Jo Gi Chun, feeling pain akin to having two of his fingers rip from his hands, screamed inside his mind. If he lost consciousness now, everything he did up till now would go to waste. He quickly manipulated the two figures, and pushed them further inside. He needed to see what was inside.

Once he pushed in the two figures further into the formation, he could see something.

There was a giant cave inside. In the middle of the cave lay a giant pond. The pond seemed to be dark, and full of poison.

‘Where is this?’

Once he thought that.

Crack—!

Another figure broke apart.

Jo Gi Chun trembled as he felt the immense pain strike his body, and used his last figure to look around. He had to see what was destroying his figures.

And right there, he saw ‘it’.

‘T, this isn’t possible.’

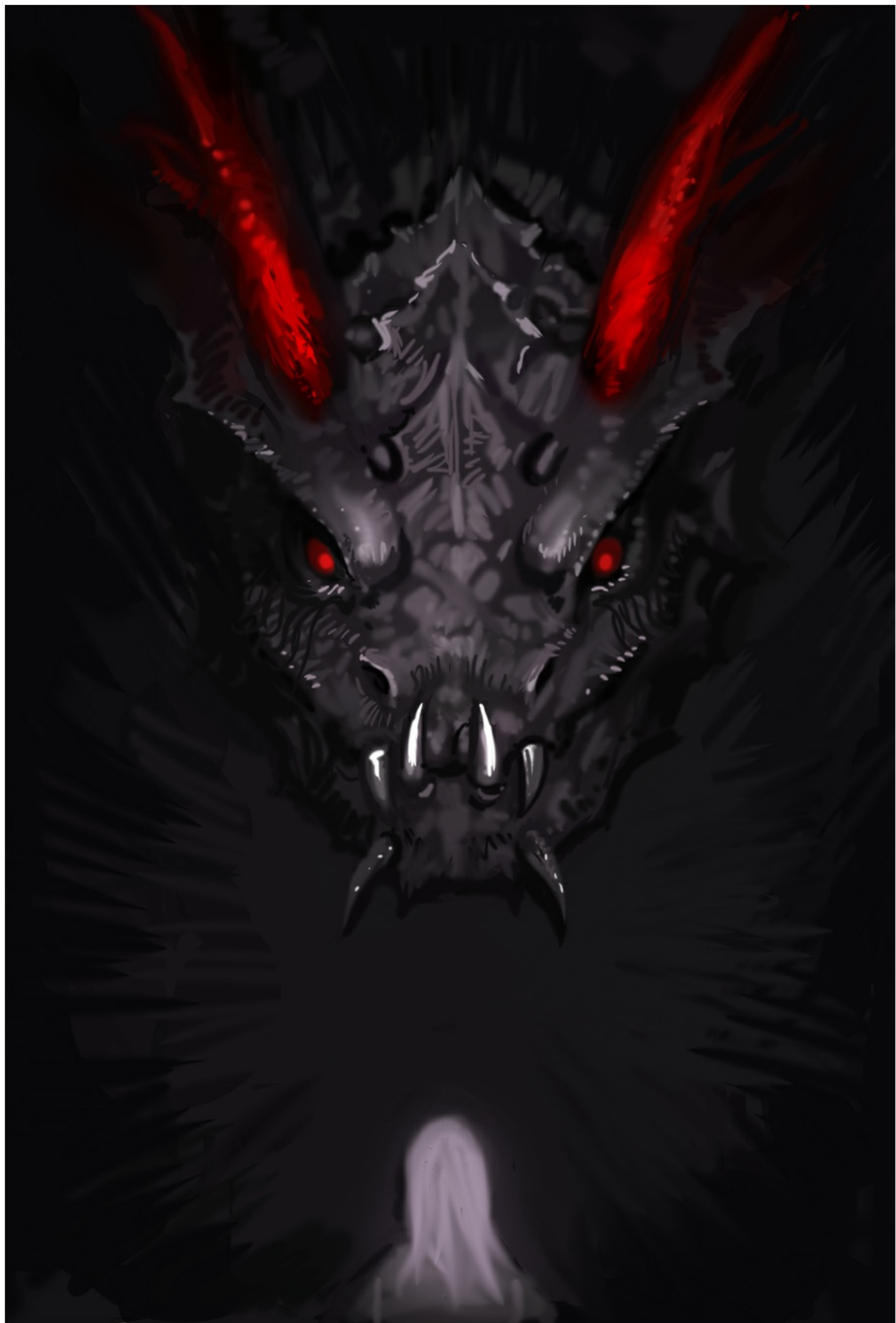
It was a snake.

A giant snake that was bigger than a house.

There were a pair of red horns protruding out of its head like a crown, and its body was encased in black scales. This snake was stuck onto the ceiling of the cave, and it was looking down at Jo Gi

Chun with a smile.

Yes. The thing was smiling. Jo Gi Chun felt terrified when he saw the snake's smile, which seemed to regard Jo Gi Chun a toy.



But what happened next surprised him even more.

[A lowly human like you managed to see me.]

“.....!”

Jo Gi Chun, outside the formation, was so surprised, that he almost screamed like a little girl.

[You are not qualified to get in here. Get out.]

The last thing Jo Gi Chun saw was the snake's tail hurtling towards him.

Chapter 27. The Reason Why Guardian Ju Is Better Than Guardian Wu?!

In China, there exists an ancient text known as the “Classic of Mountains and Seas” (山海經).

No one knows when it was made, or who made it, but the book contained stories and information regarding all the mystical beasts, gods, and demons in the world.

The book also contained information about the beings known as “Imugi”.

When Cho Ryu Hyang heard that his teacher, Jo Gi Chun, was injured, he ran to his teacher with a pale face.

Um Seung Do, while following the boy, began thinking.

‘He looks ordinary.’

The heir the Pope had chosen. In his world, the heir was the child of God.

That was why all this was so hard to understand. The boy’s skeleton was small, so it wasn’t suited for martial arts, and the boy didn’t seem that talented in it either.

But his suspicions ended there. Um Seung Do didn’t get any more

suspicious.

He wasn't the one to choose the heir. The Pope was. The strongest under the Heavens, and the representation of God. A person like that chose this boy, so the boy must have a special quality no one can see.

And that was enough to erase all his suspicions.

That was a good enough reason to satisfy everyone else in the Heavenly Demon Church. The Pope had that much of an influence over the people.

“Huff, huff.”

Um Seung Do looked at the tired boy with a straight face. Come to think of it, this boy was a person he would have to guard for a lifetime.

So he had quite a bit of time. He had a lot of time to see if the Pope's decision was indeed correct. So he wasn't really hurried to check the boy's true potential.

“Teacher!”

“You came?”

Gongson Chun Gi, who was inside the room, looked at Cho Ryu

Hyang and opened his mouth. He greeted the two guardians next to Cho Ryu Hyang.

But Cho Ryu Hyang was no longer looking at them. His eyes were looking at Jo Gi Chun, who was laying down on the bed with a pale face.

“W, what happened?”

“Let’s talk outside. The man just went to sleep. It would be troublesome if he were to wake up.”

Gongson Chun Gi dragged Cho Ryu Hyang outside. And instead of saying what had happened, he simply began thinking.

Cho Ryu Hyang waited patiently for his teacher to speak. He knew rushing things here wouldn’t do anything.

But his body revealed how anxious he truly was. Gongson Chun Gi slowly opened his mouth as he stared at Cho Ryu Hyang’s trembling arms.

“There seems to be problems with the formation.”

“What do you mean?”

“That guy saw something strange in there, apparently.”

“Something strange.....”

Gongson Chun Gi stroked his chin, and grinned.

“He says that he saw a dragon (龍), or an Imugi in there.”

“.....What?”

What does that mean? Cho Ryu Hyang made a dumb face.

“You can’t believe it, right? I can’t, either. But since the words came from his mouth, it should be the truth.”

That’s right. Jo Gi Chun despised jokes. According to his personality, he wouldn’t lie in a situation like this.

Cho Ryu Hyang tried to see if Gongson Chun Gi was actually lying or not, but soon gave up, and opened his mouth.

“So whatever was in the formation hurt teacher?”

“Seems like it. But since I didn’t see what it was myself, I find it hard to believe.....”

Cho Ryu Hyang’s eyes turned serious.

“How’s teacher doing?”

“He’s a little dehydrated, and a little unstable. But since you can recover from those, there’s not too big of a problem.....”

Gongson Chun Gi, who had stopped talking for a bit, scratched his cheeks and spoke.

“There seems to be a little problem with his arm.”

“What problem?”

“According to him, that dragon thing took his arm.”

Cho Ryu Hyang’s eyes widened. He tried to get back in the room to check, but was stopped by Gongson Chun Gi.

“Don’t worry. It’s not what you think it is.”

What else would it be, then?

“His arm looks fine on the outside. It’s just that he can’t move it.”

“.....!”

“Seeing that he’s under a pretty strong spell, there does seem to be something in there.....”

Gongson Chun Gi made a troubled expression.

“We could destroy the formation, but since that would destroy the object inside, it puts us in a troublesome situation.”

Cho Ryu Hyang adjusted his glasses, and spoke.

“I’ll go.”

“You?”

“Yes.”

Gongson Chun Gi stared at Cho Ryu Hyang, who had a serious look on his face, and shook his head.

“I know your Godly Eyes are from a different branch than mine, but this is still too dangerous. I cannot allow it.”

“I can do it.”

A stubborn face.

Gongson Chun Gi stared at his disciple’s determined face for a long time. He seemed to think of something, and smirked.

“You’re going to do it even if I say no, aren’t you?”

“.....”

“I guess disciples not listening to their teacher’s commands is a long tradition of the church. It indeed has a long history.”

When Gongson Chun Gi jokingly said this with a smile, Cho Ryu Hyang made an apologetic face.

But he had to do it. If there was something in there, only he, who learned a little about formations, could do it.

And Cho Ryu Hyang was actually quite confident of his survival. After all, he had a secret weapon, known as mathematics.

Gongson Chun Gi spoke up.

“Disciple.”

“Yes, teacher.”

“You are the disciple of that guy in the room back there, but you are also my disciple.”

“Yes.....”

Cho Ryu Hyang's eyes shook a bit. He could feel that Gongson Chun Gi was truly worried about his disciple, through the man's eyes. This kind of an emotion was exceedingly hard to resist.

Gongson Chun Gi put his hand on Cho Ryu Hyang's head.

“You might not know this, but I really like this new disciple of mine. That's why if that disciple were to get injured in any way, I might just go crazy.”

“.....”

“Do you truly have to go?”

Cho Ryu Hyang opened his mouth, then closed it again. Like what Teacher Gongson Chun Gi had said, going into the formation would be very dangerous and reckless.

But he was too angry at himself to only be patient and wait here. What was he doing while his teacher was getting injured? He was just enjoying his time as he became the heir to the church.

Cho Ryu Hyang's regret and sorrow was simply telling him to go into the formation.

“Damn it, he was right.”

Gongson Chun Gi massaged his shoulders, and started

complaining. When Cho Ryu Hyang sent his teacher a curious look, Gongson Chun Gi told the boy what happened.

“Aah. That guy told me to not tell you about what happened before he passed out. He probably said that so that you wouldn’t go into the formation, but I made a mistake. I don’t know what to tell him when he wakes up.”

“.....”

“The formation’s that dangerous. But you’re still going in it, am I correct?”

Cho Ryu Hyang nodded.

“Good. When a man makes a choice, he should stick to it till the end, even if the results of his choice may seem bad.”

Cho Ryu Hyang got his teacher’s consent.

He looked at his teacher, and said his goodbyes.

“Disciple, don’t look so happy like that. This teacher’s feeling very complicated inside right now.”

“There shouldn’t be anything you should get worried about.”

“Of course there shouldn’t be. You can get out on your own when it gets dangerous, right? You should’ve learned a bit about formations from that guy.”

“Yes.”

“Normally. I would restrain you, but.....”

“Since your Godly Eyes are a bit special, I’ll believe in you.”

“Thank you.”

Cho Ryu Hyang thought while adjusting his glasses. He would definitely finish everything with his own hands.

“Gyum, I said all that to the boy before, but I don’t think I can let him go off on his own. I feel like a father that pushed his own child into a river right now.”

Lim Hak Gyum faintly smiled. He was always a little touched by the displays of humanity that the Pope kept showing him every now and then.

[This one will go.]

Gongson Chun Gi shook his head.

“No, the boy will notice if you go. His eyes are a bit special, you see.”

He was worried. Lim Hak Gyum would be seen through by his disciple, no matter how good Lim Hak Gyum's stealth technique was. If his disciple managed to find Gyum, the boy would also realize that Gongson Chun Gi was trying to help. If that happened, the boy would think that Gongson Chun Gi didn't believe in his own disciple, and had to send a person to guard him.

‘That wouldn't be good.’

When he thought this much, Gongson Chun Gi began regretting saying the things he said before to look cool. Gongson Chun Gi began to contemplate on what to do. He opened his mouth a while later.

“Hnn, I don't really want to do it, but I guess we'll have to call in the old men.”

[.....This one will bring the Guardians here.]

Lim Hak Gyum switched places with one of his underlings outside, and disappeared.

And a little bit later, two people could be seen outside running at frightening speeds. It was Guardian Wu and Guardian Ju.

“Your Holiness!”

“Yeah. I’m not deaf. Speak more quietly.”

“What happened? Did the enemy invade?”

“I’d be happier if that happened instead.”

“Huh? It’s even worse than that?”

When Guardian Wu asked this with a surprised face, Gongson Chun Gi responded.

“It has to do with my disciple.”

“Did something happen to the young lord?”

When Guardian Ju, who had been quiet till now, asked a question with a surprised face, Gongson Chun Gi spoke.

“Something really big happened. It’s quite troublesome.”

“This one will take care of it.”

When Guardian Wu stepped forward, Guardian Ju pushed him away and opened his mouth.

“You stay out of this. Your Holiness, leave this to me.”

“That is a good attitude. Who should I choose.....”

Gongson Chun Gi thought about who to choose as he looked at the two expectant Guardians. But he soon thought of something, and made his decision.

“I think you would be more suited at doing this, compared to Guardian Wu.”

When Gongson Chun Gi nodded at Guardian Ju, Guardian Ju put on a mirthful face, and Guardian Wu put on a face of despair and sadness.

“Y, Your Holiness.”

“What?”

Guardian Wu spoke with a desperate face.

“This one can complete whatever Your Holiness throws at him faster than that guy.”

Gongson Chun Gi shook his head.

“Not this time.”

“Kuhahaha! You idiot, didn’t you hear His Holiness? I’m better than you.”

“Keuk!”

Gongson Chun Gi simply stared at the two men without saying anything, then spoke up.

“Guardian Wu, you’re body is just too big for this mission. So don’t be too sad.”

“What?”

When Guardian Wu put on a face of curiosity, Gongson Chun Gi grinned.

“Since Guardian Ju is so small. he’s suited for a mission like this. Kuhehehe.”

Gongson Chun Gi’s laugh made Guardian Ju feel that something bad was going to happen. That feeling would soon become a reality that would strike against Guardian Ju.



Chapter 28. For Teacher

Neng Ha Young was looking straight at her grandfather, with red eyes and a blush. Neng Mu gi took in her gaze without a word.

“.....Promise me something, grandpa.”

“What?”

“To never tell anyone else about this story, ever again in your life.”

Neng Mu Gi nodded.

“I promise.”

Neng Ha Young began thinking about something, then called out to her grandfather with a sad face.

“Grandpa.”

“Yeah?”

“I think it’d be better to not make the Martial World Sequence Records in this age.”

“I won’t make the Martial World Sequence Records for this era,

to protect your honor.”

She took out the partially completed sequence records from her clothes. She observed it carefully for a moment, then put it down on the table.

The sequence records had all the martial artists of this generation listed according to the order of power. Neng Ha Young didn't need it anymore.

“I don't want to do it, but since I told myself that I would do it, I will make the sequence records in the future. But not now.”

Neng Ha Young stopped speaking, and looked at her grandfather.

“I will wait until the next generation appears. I still have a lot of time left, after all.”

Neng Ha Young bit her lip, and stood up.

She expected it to an extent, but knowing the truth truly made her feel uncomfortable. That was because she had absolute confidence that her grandfather was the strongest man in the world up till now.

After seeing his granddaughter say her goodbyes and leave, Neng Mu Gi opened his mouth.

“Yup (曄).”

The empty room. In that room, where only Neng Mu Gi was thought to be in, a second person appeared out of nowhere.

“Yes, master.”

The man that appeared was the Night Emperor’s only disciple, Shi Yup (視曄).

He was a young man with a pale skin, and a smooth face. He appeared in front of Neng Mu Gi with a polite attitude. Neng Mu Gi looked at the young man, and spoke.

“How was it?”

“What do you mean?”

“How was my granddaughter, in your perspective?”

Shi Yup thought for a moment. What should he say? After thinking a bit, he spoke.

“.....She looked wise.”

“Did she, now.”

“Yes.”

“But she is in quite a bit of danger. A girl that gets a little too smart would endanger herself. Her intelligence itself would be her enemy.”

“.....”

Perhaps that was true. The martial world was a world of men. Living in that world with a woman’s body. That in itself was extremely dangerous. If a woman didn’t have a reliable shield around her, living in the martial world would not be easy.

Shi Yup quietly thought about his teacher’s words. Then he realized. His master, who seemed cold and uncaring. The only thing his master actually cared about was Neng Ha Young, his master’s granddaughter.

‘It seems that he does care about his own family.’

It seemed that Neng Mu Gi, who didn’t even seem like he would bleed when stabbed, actually had some attachments to his family. While Shi Yup was thinking about such things, Neng Mu Gi opened his mouth.

“I think the time has come to let you go.”

Neng Mu Gi’s words. It took a while for Shi Yup to process it. Once he did, his eyes shook violently.

The words he didn't expect out of his master's mouth. When his master spoke, all his thought processes paused for a split second. And after recovering, he immediately went down on his knees and bowed towards his master.

"M, master, are you trying to throw me away?"

"Yes. I'm sorry I was so late."

Shi Yup trembled at Neng Mu Gi's words.

No, not yet. This was too early. There was still much to learn from his master, wasn't there?

"I am not ready."

Neng Mu Gi shook his head.

"You have already inherited all of my techniques a long time ago. Now, you just need to break out of your shell."

"But this is still too early. Master, please take back what you have said."

Neng Mu Gi looked at his trembling disciple with a emotionless face.

“You need to learn how to live on your own, now.”

“.....!”



Living on his own.

That's right. Shi Yup had forgotten how to live without orders a long time ago.

A manual human.

Once he realized this fact, his face froze. Neng Mu Gi, seeing that, opened his mouth with a bored face.

“You are no longer my subordinate. So go. Go anywhere you want. Live the way you want.”

Neng Mu Gi said this, and looked out the window. Shi Yup, seeing his master's quiet self, couldn't approach him.

‘This can't happen.’

He had served his master for almost 20 years. He had so much loyalty towards him, that he could kill himself if his master told him to do it.

But there was something else that couldn't be explained with loyalty.

‘Why can't I leave him? Because he's admirable?’

Shi Yup began thinking. And he immediately found an answer. Neng Mu Gi was his teacher and master, and at the same time, a father like figure. Others were jealous of Neng Mu Gi's position as one of the three sovereigns, but Shi Yup knew what it was really like for Neng Mu Gi to be one of the three sovereigns.

His master's life wasn't filled with riches and prosperity. His master actually led a desolate life, contrary to what others believed.

Shi Yup never saw Neng Mu Gi laugh out of joy so far. That was why Shi Yup wanted Neng Mu Gi to become happy, at least once. The reason why Shi Yup trained day and night under his master, was to at least make his master feel a sense of accomplishment. Shi Yup had never disobeyed his master, for his master's happiness.

But not now. This was an order that he couldn't obey.

“.....I will not leave.”

Neng Mu Gi didn't respond. He simply looked out the window with an uncaring face. Shi Yup felt a sense of sternness from his master's attitude. Neng Mu Gi was a man that wouldn't back down from a decision, no matter what happened. Shi Yup, knowing that, made a desperate expression.

But after thinking for a long time, Shi Yup faintly smiled. He already knew what Neng Mu Gi was truly worried about, didn't he? Come to think of it, Shi Yup could take care of his master's only worry himself. He felt that he could make his master truly

happy by doing that.

“Thank you for taking care of me from now on.”

Neng Mu Gi did not reply. He simply turned around, and stared at Shi Yup. Shi Yup opened his mouth, under his master’s gaze.

“Master, from now on, I’ll.....”

“You idiot. I am no longer your master.”

Shi Yup trembled a bit when Neng Mu Gi said that. What else should he call Neng Mu Gi, other than “master”?

Shi Yup, after thinking a bit, thought of a word in his mind. He never dared say it before, and he never said it in the past. It was a name that Shi Yup would never get to say in his life, except in this moment.

“I will now stay near teacher’s..... relative. And I will protect her. With my life.”

Neng Mu Gi did not say anything. But Shi Yup could tell. His teacher wanted to ask Shi Yup to do this.

“Stay healthy, teacher.”

“.....”

Neng Mu Gi looked at Shi Yup, who was leaving the area without a word.

The boy was his disciple, but he never called the boy that. He had found the boy in the streets, dying, and he had imparted all his techniques to the boy, and made the boy live hidden from others.

‘Everything changes.’

Even people change.

When Neng Mu Gi thought that, he faintly smiled. The boy couldn’t live without orders. That’s what worried him the most. But didn’t the boy just act and think on his own?

Neng Mu Gi was satisfied at that moment. Shi Yup went on to do something he didn’t need to do, but since Neng Mu Gi knew what Shi Yup was like, he accepted his disciple’s decision.

If the boy started improving himself starting now, and becomes complete, a legendary swordsman would appear in the martial world. And that swordsman will protect his granddaughter. Then, his granddaughter would be safer than anyone else in the world.

Neng Mu Gi closed his eyes, and leaned back in his chair. Once he did so, he could remember the conversation he had with his granddaughter a moment ago.

Fourty years ago, Neng Mu Gi had an ambition.

Heavenly Unification.

It was something every martial artist, no, every man dreamed of. Neng Mu Gi wanted to accomplish that dream badly.

So what should he do, in order to unify the world under one power? What was the most efficient method? Neng Mu Gi thought for a long time. An answer soon came to him.

‘The strongest in the world.’

This was the martial world. In this world, power is law. Therefor, his dream would naturally be accomplished if he became the strongest.

‘But.....’

That wouldn’t be nearly enough. Then what else would he need? Neng Mu GI was again able to reach an answer in a short amount of time.

He needed something backing him up. He needed an organization that had immense power to support him. Neng Mu Gi, after

investing quite a lot of time, satisfied one of two requirements for his dream.

The Three Great Powers. The Alliance, Black Moon Guild, and the Heavenly Demon Church.

He became the leader of the Black Moon Guild. He no longer lacked much power. The only thing he had to do now, was to eliminate the two other rivals in the world.

So he went to visit them. The first person he visited was the leader of the Alliance, the Dao Emperor, Baek Mu Ryang.

It wasn't hard to meet the man. Neng Mu Gi walked through the main gate without any disguise whatsoever, but no martial artist saw him. No, they weren't even able to detect his presence.

As long as Neng Mu Gi willed it, he could make someone right in front of him not be able to notice him. After all, he was a man that surpassed human limits. A man that surpassed the normalcy. That man, after seeing Baek Mu Ryang, put on a serious face.

‘Ten steps.’

He was about ten steps away from Baek Mu Ryang. Neng Mu Gi had started thinking at that point. For the first time in his life, he had met a person that he wasn't sure if he could win against.

Once he went beyond ten steps to approach Baek Mu Ryang, he

would have no choice but to reveal himself. He didn't want that. That was because he had a feeling that he might lose.

That was why he studied the enemy for a long time. When he did so, his conviction of victory slowly rose.

‘At least an arm.’

At worst, he would die if he went up against the Dao Emperor. Unfortunately, it seemed the rumors about Baek Mu Ryang were true.

After observing Baek Mu Ryang for half a day, he made up his mind. He decided to meet the Demon Emperor. With that, Neng Mu Gi set off for the Ten Thousand Great Mountains (十萬大山).

Impregnable. (難攻不落: Hard to attack, impenetrable.)

Death on access. (出入之死: Everyone who enters, dies.)

That was what described the Heavenly Demon Church, residing in the Ten Thousand Great Mountains. A place where no one in the martial world was allowed to enter without permission. But of course, this only applied to normal people. There was no one that could stop Neng Mu Gi from entering the church.

After he climbed the mountains, he saw that man. The man who was sitting down with a lazy position, coupled with a lazy expression. It was the Demon Emperor, Gongson Chun Gi.

‘This is.....’

Neng Mu Gi’s eyes changed once he saw the Pope. He only felt one emotion that moment. Disappointment. Neng Mu Gi wrinkled his eyebrows. He just came after meeting the Dao Emperor.

That was why he believed some of the rumors about Gongson Chun Gi that circulated the martial world. Didn’t he come all the way here with a pretty big expectation for the man?

But.....

‘He’s [dead wood](#).’

(TL Note: Dead wood = useless person)

The thing that was in front of him was nothing but a scarecrow wearing some fancy clothes. It seemed that this man simply became a sovereign because of his position. Neng Mu Gi felt disgusted when he thought that this thing was on the same rank as him.

‘Let’s kill him.’

He stepped forward, determined to kill the Pope. He took another step. Neng Mu Gi slowly began walking forward to kill Gongson Chun Gi, then stopped five steps away from his target.

He changed his mind.

‘This is strange.’

Something was off. It was something that couldn’t be explained, some kind of strange feeling of danger.

‘What is this?’

Neng Mu Gi couldn’t determine what was making his instincts tremble like so. So he stepped back, for now. He began to observe the surroundings.

‘There is no need to hurry.’

He thought that the feeling would soon pass. But he was dead wrong. Half a day. Neng Mu Gi just stood in place, staring at Gongson Chun Gi for half a day.

That’s when Neng Mu Gi finally realized.

‘Something is wrong here.’

While Neng Mu Gi was thinking about something with a serious face, Gongson Chun Gi yawned, and went to sleep on his bed. Even then, Neng Mu Gi couldn’t do anything.

‘He has no openings.’

No, to be honest, the man was full of openings. But was it because the man had this many openings? Neng Mu Gi didn’t have the courage to attack. This kind of a weird feeling was something he had never encountered in his lifetime.

And after exactly half a day had passed, Gongson Chun Gi woke up with sleepy eyes, and began to go on a walk through the garden. Neng Mu Gi, who was following the Pope, opened his mouth with a stiff face.

“When was it?”

At that time, the sun was already setting, and the sky was getting colored blood red from the sun. Gongson Chun Gi wasn’t even surprised when he heard Neng Mu Gi speak. He just made an awkward face.

“You’re quite perceptive, aren’t you?”

Once Neng Mu Gi heard this, he realized. He realized that this man in front of him was observing him from the beginning. This man was acting as if he didn’t notice, from the start.

Even the Dao Emperor was unable to detect Neng Mu Gi’s technique. What all this implied was all too clear. Neng Mu Gi’s eyes began to grow cold.

“Do you know who I am?”

Gongson Chun Gi nodded. And grinned.

“They say that there is a black moon watching over the evil sky..... You’re quite amazing, just like the rumors say.”

Neng Mu Gi ground his teeth while listening to Gongson Chun Gi’s words.

Indeed. Gongson Chun Gi was a martial artist. One whose power even Neng Mu Gi couldn’t fathom. But he couldn’t back down now. He had come too far to go back.

‘I’ll kill him.’

The moment Neng Mu Gi stepped forward with his expressionless face. Gongson Chun Gi saw the heavens and the earth split in two.

Chapter 29. A Legendary Meeting

Whether it was the past or the present, Gongson Chun Gi was strong. Very strong. No one under the heavens seemed to be able to get stronger than he.

When he faced off against Neng Mu Gi. The Gongson Chun Gi from forty years ago. Even then, he was strong.

“Hoh?”

Gongson Chun Gi, who was sitting at the desk with a bored face, became curious. That was because a little while ago, something, something very strange and unique, entered his ‘area’.

It seemed so small and insignificant, that even Gongson Chun Gi nearly missed it.

“This is interesting.”

“What?”

Gongson Chun Gi stroked his chin, and smiled mischievously. He then stood up. At the same time, he faced the Demon Doctor (魔醫) Sunwu Jo Duk, who had been making a report on pills, and spoke.

“Hey.”

“Yes, Your Holiness. What do you wish?”

“Is that report important?”

What kind of a prank did the Pope have in mind this time? Thinking that, Sunwu Jo Duk responded with a calm voice.

“Yes. It’s very important. The medicinal supplies are getting low.”

“Huh? Why?”

“We are mass-producing the Heavenly Demon Spirit Pill, like you ordered a while back.”

“Oh, yeah, right.”

Gongson Chun Gi responded lazily, and spoke while looking at the door.

“Is that report as important as your life?”

“What?”

“Would you risk your life for that report?”

Sunwu Jo Duk thought for a moment. The new Pope of the

church, Gongson Chun Gi, had a bad habit of hiding something, then asking others questions about it.

The problem was that whenever the Pope did this, the things he hid from others were often very ‘important’. But then, while Gongson Chun Gi liked playing around, he never risked a person’s life doing it.

The word ‘life’ came out of that man’s mouth. This deserved to make him think a bit more.

Sunwu Jo Duk proudly replied, whilst stroking his gray beard several times.

“Of course my neck is more important. I can make hundreds of these reports, anyway.”

Gongson Chun Gi grinned.

“Then get out. I have no intention to protect someone as old as you by killing myself in the process.”

Sunwu Jo Duk suddenly became a lot more cautious.

“Is it an assassin?”

“Maybe, I think it’s a little different from that.”

Could a man who strolls in here in broad daylight truly be an assassin? Gongson Chun Gi smiled when he thought about that. At the same time, Sunwu Jo Duk spoke with a serious tone.

“I’ll bring the boys from the Bladed Killer Corps.”

“No. They’ll just be a bother.”

Gongson Chun Gi waved his hands in annoyance, and leaned against the table.

“This isn’t something that can be solved with numbers alone.”

“He’s that good?”

“Yeah, he’s that good.”

Right. The person that was approaching him right now wasn’t someone that could be overwhelmed by just numbers.

“Just get out as if you don’t know anything, and sort out everyone in the area. I want to stay alone with this guy.”

“It’s too dangerous.”

“Do you not know me? I’m super strong.”

“I know. That’s why it’s dangerous.”

“What’s dangerous?”

Sunwu Jo Duk smiled.

“That assassin’s in danger. Wouldn’t we have to catch him alive, to interrogate?”

“Well, I don’t know if I could actually capture him alive.....”

When Gongson Chun Gi spoke with a hesitant tone, Sunwu Jo Duk finally realized how serious all this was. That was why he spoke again with an even more serious tone.

“Should I bring those old men here?”

“It would certainly be a little better if those old gluttons were here.....”

Gongson Chun Gi paused, and smirked.

“But that would hurt my pride, don’t you think?”

“.....”

Sunwu Jo Duk didn’t smile. He looked around a bit, then spoke.

“It wouldn’t be enough with just a few guards, right?”

“I already told them. They’ll leave once you leave.”

“Why don’t you just bring in the old good-for-nothings instead? They should do their job for once. Don’t you think they would be getting tired of playing around every day, by now?”

“Aren’t those old guys your friends? Aren’t you being a little bit too offensive, just because they aren’t here?”

Sunwu Jo Duk became enraged in a second.

“What do you mean, friends? I never befriended a bunch of good-for-nothings.”

Gongson Chun Gi nodded.

“I knew it. No wonder they said that they never befriended a stupid medicine man.”

“Those cheeky bastards.....”

Right before Sunwu Jo Duk spewed out more insults, Gongson Chun Gi spoke.

“He’s coming closer. You should get out by now.”

“Will you really be alright? I could help, if the situation is really urgent.”

Gongson Chun Gi shook his head.

“You’ll be a bother.”

“.....Alright.”

Even though he still wasn’t a harmonious expert, he had reached a peak level in martial arts. But Sunwu Jo Duk was more skilled in the art of medicine than martial arts, and had built up quite a reputation for his poison. His poison was strong enough to kill a harmonious expert, after all.

‘But I would still be a bother?’

Sunwu Jo Duk faintly smiled. He realized that this wasn’t the place for him.

“You know it would be troublesome if you just died here, right?”

Gongson Chun Gi nodded.

“I know. It’ll be more embarrassing than troublesome, though.”

“Right. I’ll take my leave, then.”

Sunwu Jo Duk bowed, and walked up to the door behind him. He stopped in front of the door, and spoke without looking back.

“The old pope told me to take care of you well.”

“I know.”

“This old man hasn’t done anything significant for you yet, so I’ll be angry if you just died here, okay?”

“Yeah. Well, I have my own reasons for not dying. My life is just getting better after studying martial arts for that long. I can’t just die here.”

Gongson Chun Gi smiled, and spoke again.

“I have no intention to die, so just get out and wait. Let’s have dinner together or something later.”

“Okay. Ah, and if it’s possible, can you leave him alive? We’ll have to interrogate him.”

“I’ll try.”

Sunwu Jo Duk opened the door with a satisfied face.

And the moment before the door closed, someone else came into the temple. Gongson Chun Gi didn't respond at all to this. Actually, he pretended to not notice the man, and observed the intruder in his own ways. He got quite surprised.

‘This is.....’

It was amazing. There was no other way to describe it.

Gongson Chun Gi kept trying to stop himself from smiling.

He was happy. To think there was another human that attained this much power, other than his mentor. He even began to be thankful for learning martial arts, for the first time in his life.

‘When will he attack?’

What weapons will he use?

Wait, does he use weapons?

How'll he attack?

He kept thinking of new questions that came and went in mere seconds.

Come to think of it, he couldn't even remember the last time he observed and inspected an enemy like this.

‘Come on.’

He wanted to see the intruder. He wanted to see how that guy got to such a level. Surely the man used different means compared to him, to get to this level.

‘I want to see him.’

He wanted to get a glimpse of the world that man saw. That was why Gongson Chun Gi pretended to be weak.

After a short while, the intruder began to move.

One step. Another one. The man stopped exactly five steps away from Gongson Chun Gi.

‘Why?’

What went wrong here? While Gongson Chun Gi was yawning with a relaxed face, something happened to the intruder.

A look of suspicion rose in the man's face. The man knew something was wrong. Something. The man found something wrong about Gongson Chun Gi.

‘Then.....’

Gongson Chun Gi stretched his arms, then lay down on the bed. He then proceeded to go to sleep.

It was impossible to attempt to fake sleep in front of an expert like this. He’d have to sleep for real. This was definitely a big gamble for Gongson Chun Gi, too.

But Gongson Chun Gi smiled in his mind. Wouldn’t things get more exciting this way?

So he slept. He fell into a deep slumber and woke up, but the intruder hadn’t moved a bit from his previous spot. Exactly five steps. The man was looking at him from that distance.

‘He’s very careful.’

What should he do? What should he do to make that guy move?

Gongson Chun Gi headed for the back yard whilst thinking that. He hadn’t felt something like this in a while. The feeling that every one of his cells were coming alive. This feeling of life. His body was filled with a feeling that couldn’t really be explained by words.

He didn’t find anyone he could fight seriously after his teacher passed away.

‘Was I frustrated?’

Gongson Chun Gi leisurely walked around the back garden while thinking this about himself. The twilight in the distance dyed the back garden in a shade of red.

While Gongson Chun Gi was thinking on his own, watching the scenery, the man exactly five steps away from Gongson Chun Gi opened his mouth.

“Since when?”

Gongson Chun Gi felt the mysteries that surrounded the man all but disappear the moment that man spoke. There was only one man in the world that could show this much skill in stealth.

Gongson Chun Gi sat down in a spot he found nearby, and opened his mouth.

“You’re quite perceptive, aren’t you?”

The man’s face twisted by a minute degree when Gongson Chun Gi said that. It seemed the man wasn’t very well versed in hiding emotions. When Gongson Chun Gi thought that much, the man spoke.

“Do you know who I am?”

Of course I do. Thinking that, Gongson Chun Gi nodded.

“They say that there is a black moon watching over the evil sky..... You’re quite amazing, just like the rumors say.”

When the assassin heard his words. The hesitation in the Night Emperor’s face all but disappeared.

‘He’s coming.’

Gongson Chun Gi smiled. He couldn’t wait. Right now, this battle between the two ultimate experts didn’t require much time. That was because petty tricks were meaningless in front of an ultimate expert. They had to bring out their full strength right off the bat.

Because of that, everything would be settled in mere moments. One strike would determine life and death. His life depended on this one strike.

Was it because of that? Gongson Chun Gi’s mouth went dry.

‘This is it.’

The feeling of his entire body, from head to toe, coming alive. He could feel his blood pumping out of his heart like a raging horse.

Gongson Chun Gi was happy. No, he was so happy that he

wanted to laugh loudly on the spot. At this moment, where he was standing together with his opponent, he thanked his teacher for teaching him martial arts.

‘Don’t kill someone like this?’

That was crazy. He had accepted a hard request without even realizing it. Gongson Chun Gi laughed a bit when he thought about his exchange with Sunwu Jo Duk.

It was easy to kill. Trying to capture someone who was trying to kill him, was not.

‘But that is what is making all this so worthwhile.’

He didn’t think it was impossible. That was because Gongson Chun Gi believed himself to be the strongest under the heavens.

Gongson Chun Gi’s eyes widened when he thought that much. The cold feeling running down his back. The moment his entire body was awakened by a frightful feeling, Neng Mu Gi came at him like an arrow.

At the same time, Gongson Chun Gi saw the heavens and the earth split in two.

‘I can see it!’

As every fiber of his body tensed, Gongson Chun Gi's response was as fast as light. He stopped breathing, and lifted both his hands upwards. He held a position where the two palms of his hands were facing each other. All he had to do now was to add internal energy into his arms.

Crack–

His two arms, which were injected with an unbearable amount of internal energy, expanded with a strange sound. Gongson Chun Gi felt immense pain from this, but he still smiled from the adrenaline.

‘Block it! Block it! Block it!’

When one begins studying swords, he/she is taught how to slice. After that, he/she will be taught how to pierce, which would eventually evolve into a single beam of light that will snuff out an enemy's life.

But the thing that was approaching Gongson Chun Gi wasn't a line.

Dot.

The man who became one with the sword, became a single dot that came for Gongson Chun Gi's heart. A sword that found the shortest distance to the enemy, and pierces.

‘It’s fast!’

The strongest technique.

This technique demands the user to focus all his energy into the tip of the sword, and release it explosively. Neng Mu Gi thought that even a god would be incapable of blocking this attack. But.....

Chiiii—

With a sound of something burning, Neng Mu Gi’s sword came to a halt right in front of Gongson Chun Gi’s heart. He had failed to pierce his target.

Neng Mu Gi’s eyes started to get dull. But he had to ask. Neng Mu Gi opened his mouth with a tired voice.

“.....What is the name of this technique?”

Gongson Chun Gi made an awkward face. He didn’t know what to say. After trying to think up of something cool, he simply shook his head, and spoke.

“I don’t know. I just blocked as I saw fit.”

Tududuk—

Gongson Chun Gi's two sleeves burst right that moment. At the same time, the sleeves burnt away into little bits.

Neng Mu Gi observed all this with a bored face, then put his sword back in its hilt. It was meaningless now.

“I lost. Kill me.”

Gongson Chun Gi blocked his technique with just two arms. Neng Mu Gi had felt some sort of an immense pressure from those arms.

He felt miserable. His life's work all but crumbled with this encounter. He couldn't even stand because of how tired he was. His previous attack really was his all.

‘That was dangerous.’

Gongson Chun Gi, too, was tired, even though he looked fine on the outside. Like Neng Mu Gi, he spent all his energy in that block.

If the other side was faster even minutely, or if he made a slight error while blocking..... he didn't even want to think about it. Gongson Chun Gi stretched his neck.

Crack–

Hearing the cracks from his neck, he smiled.

“That was quite something. I don’t think I had this much fun since my teacher passed away.”

“.....”

“Did you come here because of the Black Moon Guild?”

“No. This was my independent action.”

“Really? That’s good.”

Gongson Chun Gi took a seat on a rock next to him, and spoke.

“You want to have some food before you leave?”

“.....”

Neng Mu Gi was speechless.

This was the first meeting between Neng Mu Gi and Gongson Chun Gi, that wasn’t known to the world.



Chapter 30. Cho Ryu Hyang's Challenge

The Book of Mountains and Seas was the compilation of all the information from the Chinese myths and stories. In it, one could find information on the Imugi.

But even in a book like that, there lay no information about a red horned, black scaled Imugi, many times bigger than normal. Even the Guangya (廣雅), which rivals the Book of Mountains and Seas, contained no information on that type of an Imugi.

A black scaled Imugi with red horns. It was a strange existence that had never been seen in the world until now.

‘This shouldn’t be possible.’

Cho Ryu Hyang sorted his thoughts as he clambered up the mountain.

A formation was something created by man by bending the laws of nature to his will. Since it is not something made by god, living beings can not survive in a formation for long.

But his teacher saw something alive. It didn’t matter whether it was a dragon or an Imugi. The fact that something lived inside a formation was amazing in itself already.

He climbed higher as he thought that, and reached a place that had strange stones arranged all over the place. Cho Ryu Hyang approached one, and observed it carefully. From the shadows, there was someone watching him do all this.

‘Dammit. Dammit!’

Ju Sang San.

He served as one of the eight guardians of the church, and was also known as the Blood Sound Demon in the martial world. He was a fearsome man.

A person like that, was currently buried in the ground with only his head poking out. He was observing Cho Ryu Hyang’s every move.

‘Do we really have to go this far?’

This really wasn’t something to be happy about, the Pope selecting him. He didn’t know why, but the Pope told him to not get within 900 meters of the boy.

But that wasn’t all.

‘To think he’d make me use a third-rate technique like this.....’

Burrowing (土遁術: A technique to move faster in the ground).

Ju Sang San felt despondent. He had to crawl along the ground like his life depended on it, in order to use this technique. Ju Sang San had even reconsidered taking the mission, taking into account the shameful position he would have to take.

But whose order was it? The Pope's orders were absolute. Plus, was he not serving the Pope's first disciple right now?

This mission was something to be proud of. There was nothing shameful about this at all.

‘For the church.....’

Ju Sang San strengthened his weakening resolve, and wiped sweat off his face. He became as quiet as possible, and observed the young man in front of him.

‘This is.....’

He knew what the symbols on the stone meant. They were mathematical symbols that were in use a long time ago. Those symbols were interlaced to look like a beautiful pattern etched onto stone. Cho Ryu Hyang had no idea how they were made, but the symbols were glowing.

Cho Ryu Hyang calmly began to translate the symbols. He soon

realized that they were not as hard as he had first thought. They were not in much use in this day and age, but as long as you knew them, translating them was not hard at all.

Cho Ryu Hyang's eyes brightened once he finished translating a part of the symbols.

‘This is a language.’

Someone, someone from the past, created a language using mathematics, and had done so using a way that was very similar to his teacher's method..

Since he already knew something like this before, he didn't encounter too much trouble. Once he realized what it all was, everything became easy. He could instantly translate everything else that was written on the stone column.

‘An Imugi.....’

Stones such as these often talked of things like the Imugi. A snake that failed to transform into a dragon. That was an Imugi. Formations are usually described using metaphors, but apparently, this time it was not so.

Cho Ryu Hyang paused at the last sentence. There was something in the last sentence of the column that caught his attention.

‘Only a person holding the [dragon ball](#) can go in?’

(TL: I thought using the word “Cintamani” would be a bit weird, so I substituted with the next best thing.)

When Cho Ryu Hyang thought that, he heard someone laughing in his mind.

Zhuge Liang. He was laughing.

‘What is it?’

Zhuge Liang didn’t respond immediately to Cho Ryu Hyang’s question. But the old man did seem very amused.

[Greenhorn, I now understand why you are so talented in Math.]

The reason he was talented? What did that mean? When Cho Ryu Hyang put on a confused expression, Zhuge Liang spoke.

[The answer just comes to you once you contemplate on a problem for a long time. Greenhorn, that’s probably your biggest advantage.]

Zhuge Liang paused, and then spoke whilst gazing affectionately at the stone in front of Cho Ryu Hyang.

[A human life really is unpredictable. That is why it is so amusing.]

Now, what did that mean? Cho Ryu Hyang was waiting for an answer, but Zhuge Liang did not continue.

He simply stared at the stone for a long time, and then spoke with a faint smile.

[There are times where the old triumphs over the new. I really like it when that happens.]

This too, was not really understandable. While Cho Ryu Hyang was confused, Zhuge Liang stared at him and said,

[Greenhorn, it seems that you were destined to come here. So don't mull over useless things, and enter.]

Cho Ryu Hyang realized something.

‘Does the elder know about this place?’

Zhuge Liang didn't respond. He just fingered his feathered fan, and smiled. Cho Ryu Hyang was convinced that the old man knew something, but he did not press further.



‘I have to go in anyway.’

Zhuge Liang. The old man’s words were right. No matter how much he thought about the formation, the answer wouldn’t come to him. He had to go into the formation, and find the answer for himself.

‘I was being a cowardly bird.’

A bird surprised by a bow (傷弓之鳥).

It meant that once someone was surprised by something, he/she would again be surprised by something similar.

It seemed that Cho Ryu Hyang had become overly cautious after his suffering inside the formation that he had created a while back. Come to think of it, this was different from what happened before.

He wasn't afraid of what was inside. After all, Cho Ryu Hyang had the weapon known as 'Mathematics', didn't he?

Cho Ryu Hyang steadied his breath. He could see an entirely new world laid out in front of him. Cho Ryu Hyang began to walk into the formation.

“You came?”

“Yes, senior brother.”

“Thanks for coming all the way here.”

“Why would I not come, when senior brother called?”

“Hehe, your words are a bit thorny.”

“You heard me well, if that’s the case.”

The Dao Emperor, Baek Mu Ryang. He stared at this young junior brother of his, then smirked.

“I wondered why my teacher was taking in a disciple in his final years, but I think I understand a little now. You have grown much since the last time I saw you. I’m envious.”

Was he in his thirties? The man in the white clothing and the white bandana spoke impudently..

“I just am a person that everyone is envious of. You see the line right over there? I know you want me, but you’ll have to wait, senior brother.”

The two stars that support the whole of the Alliance.

One was a star high up in the sky, the Dao Emperor Baek Mu Ryang. The other was a star in the mountains that calmly gathered light, the member of the 15 guests, the Lion Sword King (獅子劍君). The man’s name was Yu Sul Bin(柳雪玘).

A man who hated evil, and valued justice. Unlike Baek Mu Ryang, he nurtured four children as the core disciples of the Alliance. Unlike his appearance, which made him look like he was in his early thirties, he was actually a harmonious expert in his fifties.

“By the way, why did senior brother call me all the way here to a

dangerous town like this?”

The Lion Sword King did not go outside a lot. At least, ‘publicly’ he didn’t go out. He was the hidden sword of the Alliance. The man who would lead the Alliance after Baek Mu Ryang retires.

“Come to think of it, this town doesn’t have a red light district. I chose a town without women, which are like oxygen for you. I made a big mistake, sorry.”

Yu Sul Bin grinned and shook his head.

“There are no towns that doesn’t have any women. Senior Brother really doesn’t know much about women. To think that you think that women only exist in the red light district..... hm, it seems that you still have much to learn.”

“Hoho, my knowledge in that area, compared to you, is just like an ignorant child, which shames me. Could you please teach this ignorant senior brother?”

“How does tonight sound? I’ll enlighten you.”

Yu Sul Bin made a face of ‘Sure, I’ll be generous for once.’ towards Baek Mu Ryang. Seeing that, Baek Mu Ryang laughed loudly, and shook his head.

“Tonight would be a bit troublesome.”

“Do you have a meeting with someone?”

“No, I have a mission for you. Starting tonight.”

Yu Sul Bin’s playful face suddenly turned serious.

Sometimes, he went outside in order to perform ‘unofficial’ missions. He came all the way here for the same reasons.

But this mission was a little different from ones in the past. Usually, he would be debriefed on the mission before the trip, but this time, everything was extremely secretive.

“It has to do with the Demon Church, correct?”

“You are indeed correct.”

“What do I have to do?”

Baek Mu Ryang faintly smiled.

Now that his strongest weapon was ready for use, the way he would use it would either bring great profit to the Alliance, or it wouldn’t do anything at all.

“In two days, there will be a battle against the Demon Church at

the Wisdom Plains (般若平).”

Yu Sul Bin’s eyes sparkled.

“Really? We’re fighting them?”

“Aren’t there a little too many men here for all this to just be a joke?”

“I wouldn’t put it past you, senior brother, to tell everyone that this whole thing was just a joke.”

“Do I seem that untrustworthy to you? That makes me sad.”

Yu Sul Bin grinned at Baek Mu Ryang’s words.

“I just meant that senior brother would do anything as long as it benefits the Alliance.”

“So you weren’t insulting me.”

Right. As long as it was for the future of the Alliance, he could do anything. Baek Mu Ryang rubbed his chin, and spoke.

“This could bring a huge profit to the Alliance. So you must succeed. I have no one else but you to rely upon.”

“I’m Yu Sul Bin, you know.”

Yu Sul Bin was quite proud of his name. That was because he believed that a name was something that represented a person’s worthiness. Baek Mu Ryang, knowing that, nodded.

“I know. Why would I not know about my junior brother, who never fails? But you will have to be a bit more careful this time, since one could say that the reason for this whole fight is because of this.”

“Hoh?”

Yu Sul Bin made an excited face. He was sad that he wouldn’t be able to fight in the battle, but he received an important mission. What was the mission, then?

“What must I do?”

Baek Mu Ryang didn’t reply immediately. This was because of the man’s habit of pausing before saying important things.

“When the Alliance-Demon war begins, everyone will inevitably gather at the Wisdom Plains. So while that’s happening, you must take some people from the main branch, and seize the Moon Edge Blade Technique. That is what you have to do.”

The ‘secret’ retrieval of the Moon Edge blade Technique. That was the mission that Yu Sul Bin received.

“I will bring it back, on my honor.”

“I trust you, junior brother.”

Behind the front that was the Alliance-Demon war, a secret plan was thus being hatched.

Chapter 31. The Imugi's Wish

An Imugi that failed to become a dragon cannot survive in the material world for long. That was because it failed to become an immortal being selected by the heavens. 'It' was in a similar case in the past, too.

The day where there was quite a bit of rain. 'It' used up all the power it had in order to ascend. Already, a half of his body had turned into a dragon's. Once he ascends, his other half will also transform, turning him into a full-fledged dragon. But unfortunately, the gate of heaven did not open on that fateful day.

'It' settled its tired body in the bottom of the Dragon Pond (龍泉). It was waiting for its death quietly.

The being that was neither a dragon or an Imugi. 'It' was fated to soon die and disappear from the world forever. The one that appeared in front of the dying being was a human, something that 'it' regarded as worthless before.

[.....You're lucky.]

When it opened its eyes, it could see something in front of it. A thin human male. A weak human that didn't even look like it could lift a twig.

However, 'it' was currently very weak. At this rate, he would be thrashed by this weak human, and spit out his Neidan (內丹) and die. That was the fate of most imugis that failed to ascend, after all.

Having his stomach cut open by a human, and having his Neidan ripped away from his body. 'It' quietly accepted its fate, but the human simply stood there, looking into the pond for a long time.

An arrogant look.

The human didn't look afraid at all, even when looking at a giant half-dragon half-imugi monster. Actually, he had an excited look on his face.

"I never saw a dragon that failed to ascend. Interesting."

[.....]

"Are you dying?"

'It' looked up towards the human. 'It' then proceeded to smile. Those eyes the human possessed were something that you'd attain once you surpassed the limits of the human race, wasn't it? 'It' was happy that it got to see something so rare before death.

"Do you wish to live?"

[.....Cocky little thing. Do not speak so casually, lowly human.]

"I can't do that. I'm a little bored, you see."

‘It’ didn’t respond, and shut its eyes under the pond. ‘It’ wanted to rest. Come to think of it, ‘It’ used up too much energy. ‘It’ used up too much time of its life polishing its power. Now that ‘It’ had failed, it didn’t want to do anything. ‘It’ just wanted to rest.

“I will give you life.”

‘It’ snorted in amusement. The human was insane. There was no way to hide its giant body in this world. Its body had turned too big because of the half of his body becoming those of a dragon’s. This world could not support a massive body like that. ‘It’ would slowly get dissolved away from the world, and die.

“You’re lucky that you met me.”

Lucky? Who’s he kidding? The man stretched out his hand towards the pond, not caring if ‘It’ would get angry or not. That was the first meeting between ‘It’ and Zhuge Liang.

[Do you have a wish, human?]

“A wish?”

[Yes. A wish. I will grant you a single wish.]

“You? Something that failed to even become a dragon?”

Zhuge Liang smirked. But he knew. He knew that this new friend of his, even though it failed to become a dragon, still held immense power..... Zhuge Liang leaned back on his chair, and spoke.

“I accomplished everything I wanted to do by my own hands. But there is one thing that bugs me. There’s no one who can understand on my teachings properly.”

There was no one who could understand Zhuge Liang’s teachings in the present world. The fate of having no disciples. That ultimately meant that his knowledge would fade away once he died.

[It bugs you? Would what you said be your wish, then?]

“Is that how it works? Well, this isn’t something even you can do, anyways.”

‘It’ twisted its body to look at Zhuge Liang, and smiled.

[Human, you are underestimating me. I will grant you your wish.]

“Really? Haha, if that happens, I too, will grant you a single wish.”

‘It’s face turned extremely serious.

[.....Humans make easy promises. I do not trust promises made by humans.]

The past or the present, humans made promises that they'd never be able to keep.

“You don't trust me?”

‘It’ paused, and began to think. After a moment, ‘It’ shook its head.

[I trust you, human. You are special.]

“Should I be happy?”

Zhuge Liang smiled. And that was how a thousand year old promise was made.

[You promised.]

‘It’ was saved that time, by that man. Perhaps the man did it because he was bored. But they still made a promise. And ‘It’ had fulfilled its part of the promise. That was how ‘It’ repaid the man who introduced ‘It’ to the world of Math.

[.....He's coming.]

The time was coming. The one who would complete the promise would be coming soon. 'It' closed its eyes, and waited patiently. There was no need to hurry. Didn't he fail to ascend a thousand years ago due to haste? 'It' couldn't make the same mistake again.

'It's cold.'

The formation was strangely cold. The giant aura that suppressed everything inside, and the seven giant mountains weren't a problem for him. But the strange coldness inside didn't seem to be related to the formation. It seemed to be something that came from the location itself.

'It's strange.'

Indeed, this was something extremely strange. This formation here was a formation, and at the same time, not a formation. It was something where a pocket of space was twisted a little bit, so that it would be completely cut off from the rest of the world. Most of the space that got cut off retained its original shape.

'Why?'

This type of a formation was, for some reason, extremely strange, and at the same time, complicated.

‘But.....’

Cho Ryu Hyang fixed his glasses. He still had his special vision, didn't he? The power to perceive the truth of every being in the world was nonsensically powerful when used in a formation. Cho Ryu Hyang, who had been leisurely walking through the formation, stopped and turned his head. The cave that suddenly appeared in front of his eyes.

Cave of Disturbance (騷擾洞)

He could see the words someone wrote on top of the cave entrance. At the same time, he was clearly able to sense that the cold power that covered the inside of the formation was originating from this cave.

‘It's here.’

This was it. Whatever hurt his teacher, it was inside here. He could feel it.

Cho Ryu Hyang walked inside filled with absolute confidence. Whatever was inside, he wasn't about to let it go peacefully. A feeling of rage pulsed within his body. Thanks to that, he was able to resist the power of fear.

But Cho Ryu Hyang should've been careful. The thing inside was bigger than he had thought, and it was very much real. Jo Gi Chun felt the formation's power using clay proxies. Because of that, Jo

Gi Chun experienced what happened inside indirectly. However, Cho Ryu Hyang was taking on the energy head-on.

That's why the moment he came in, he looked up. He felt a presense there. And the moment he did so, he opened his mouth in surprise.

“.....A dragon?”

Cho Ryu Hyang, believing that his eyes were broken, tried using the Faultless View of The World multiple times. But the thing in front of him did not change. It wasn't an illusion.

‘It can't be true!’

How could such a giant being exist? Cho Ryu Hyang's brain stopped processing because he was so overwhelmed by the sight in front of him. He was frozen.

He knew that things inside a formation tended to move a bit away from reality at times. But this was too much. How could a living being exist like this? This wasn't even possible! While Cho Ryu Hyang was standing there in shock, ‘It’ moved.

Shashasha–

The dragon's body smoothly slid off the stalagmite on the ceiling. The two red horns resembling a crown, and the black, scales resembling obsidian. Lastly, the pair of golden eyes that seemed to

stare straight into one's soul. Those two eyes held incomparable joy at the moment.

[It's been a thousand years.]

Dragon. No, the imugi made a satisfied expression. At the same time, Cho Ryu Hyang stumbled backwards with a pale face.

‘It spoke?’

Cho Ryu Hyang thought that at this point, he was used to strange and mysterious things. But this was on a completely different level.

[I kept my promise, human.]

When the giant being approached him, Cho Ryu Hyang couldn't breathe. The aura the imugi exuded from its body was too powerful. Cho Ryu Hyang began to slowly walk away. But while he did so, he noticed something extremely strange.

‘I can't..... see the number.’

Even though the monster was clearly real, it didn't have a number on itself. Unreadable. Since something like this had never happened before, Cho Ryu Hyang was extremely confused. The imugi spoke whilst looking at that.

[It is time for you to complete your promise, human.]

The moment the imugi stopped talking, one of the scales under its chin began to glow in red.

Voom–

Cho Ryu Hyang simply stood there, listening to the sound ring throughout the cave.



Dokun–

‘What’s this?’

Cho Ryu Hyang pressed on his chest with his hands. His heart began to beat extremely fast. Right then, the old man in his brain, spoke.

[He’s still very stubborn. To think that he was waiting for a thousand years.....]

At that time, Zhuge Liang made that promise on a whim. No, to be more accurate, he made the promise because it was interesting. He saved a dying being and made a pointless promise. But that promise eventually found its way back to him, a thousand years later.

It was quite surprising, but at the same time, Zhuge Liang was amazed by the imugi that managed to keep the promise for a thousand years.

‘He said that humans forget promises easily?’

It was true. Zhuge Liang could only admit it. Humans easily made promises, and easily forgot them. He couldn’t do anything about that.

Zhuge Liang faintly smiled. He expected it once he saw the stone column outside, but to think the one in the formation would really

be him. When he was thinking that, the boy asked him a question.

‘Do you happen to know something about that monster?’

Of course he did. But Zhuge Liang didn’t say anything. Things would only get annoying if he spoke.

But Cho Ryu Hyang wasn’t an idiot. The boy managed to find out that the two had a sort of a relationship with each other. Cho Ryu Hyang was about to ask that question, but Zhuge Liang was one step faster.

[Greenhorn, you must fulfill a promise in my stead.]

What promise? The moment Cho Ryu Hyang thought this, Zhuge Liang responded.

[You see that scale over there?]

The scale that turned red from heat. Strangely, it was a scale that faced an opposite direction from all the other scales. When Cho Ryu Hyang saw it, he could begin hearing the sound of his heart in his ears.

Dokun– dokun–

‘Eh?’

Cho Ryu Hyang tightly held onto his chest. The area on his chest where the heart was located began to feel like it was burning. Zhuge Liang just kept on talking as if he didn't know what was going on.

[That is the Reversed Scale (逆鱗). It is a crucial ingredient an imugi needs to become a dragon.]

It's a ingredient that imugis need to become dragons? Zhuge Liang nodded.

[It is the ingredient used to make the Dragon Ball (如意珠).]

Dokun- dokun-

Cho Ryu Hyang's heartbeats began to get louder. And once Cho Ryu Hyang's couldn't hear anything other than his heartbeat, Zhuge Liang began to talk to the imugi, whilst looking straight at the being with Cho Ryu Hyang's eyes.

[In the past, I have given you a name. I gave you a new life. And now, it seems I will be giving you a chance to ascend.]

The black-scaled imugi.

The imugi could see a faint trace of the human from a long time ago, inside the little boy's eyes. A strange, proud human that wouldn't bow down to anyone. But thanks to this man, it would be able to get another chance to ascend.

[It's been a while.]

Zhuge Liang smiled at the imugi's words. It seemed that he'd have to change his opinion about the imugi being a lowly life form. After all, the imugi was the only being so far that was able to understand his teachings perfectly. Plus, it was still alive, and it was able to recognize him in this state. That guy was pretty good. Zhuge Liang fiddled with feathered fan in his hands, and replied.

[It really has, hasn't it, Tian Nu.]

Tian Nu (天怒: Heaven's wrath). It was the name Zhuge Liang made for the imugi. The imugi spoke while looking at Zhuge Liang.

[I fulfilled the promise I made with you.]

A promise even Zhuge Liang forgot about.

[He's still very intelligent, I see.]

A long time ago, there existed people who could understand the words of Zhuge Liang. One was the imugi in front of him. The other was Pang Tong (鳳雛). These two were the only true friends Zhuge Liang had, the people he could talk to about math without holding back at all.

[I waited a thousand years so that you would be able to meet that

boy.]

A little at a time. A tiny amount..... The imugi had been using a miniscule amount of energy over the years to let the two meet.

[Now, fulfill my wish.]

The imugi's wish. Its wish was all too clear. And Cho Ryu Hyang had the power to fulfill it.

Chapter 32. The Alliance-Demon War

No matter how much time passes, there is one relationship that would never changed in the martial world.

Light and Dark. Black and White.

A relationship between two opposites. This was the current relationship between the Alliance and the Heavenly Demon Church.

“I really can’t do anything this time.”

Gongson Chun Gi sighed. He wanted to avoid fighting. He tried really hard to not resort to violence. He wanted to avoid spilling blood whenever possible.

“Damn it.”

Even then, Gongson Chun Gi hesitated. If you come out of the Gansu Branch and walk for about half a day at a slow pace, you would reach the Wisdom Plains. Many of the church members will be fighting there.

Even if the two sides didn’t mutually agree to fight there, they both had to choose that place as the battleground. And once they both get there, they would have to battle for their lives.

Gongson Chun Gi clenched his fist unconsciously. He had to use his full strength now. After all, it was all too clear that many of the church members would die if he hesitated any further.

Gongson Chun Gi stepped up the platform, and took a look at the 5000 martial artists laid out in front of him. Once he saw them, he smiled without realizing it. That was because he could clearly feel the message the martial artists were trying to deliver through their gazes.

‘You guys wanted to fight this much?’

Their boiling blood. Their loud, beating heartbeats were clearly transferred to the Pope’s ears. A sort of desire for fighting that a Martial Artist possessed. That desire, which they have been suppressing for years, now burst forth like a volcano.

‘Damn it.’

He made a mistake. He took on the energy of the martial artists full force. Thanks to that, Gongson Chun Gi’s desire of stopping the fight completely vaporised. After all, he too, was a martial artist.

“.....Well, we did endure for quite a long time.”

Once Gongson Chun Gi opened his mouth, the whole area suddenly became deathly quiet. Gongson Chun Gi slowly kneeled down. He was trying to match his height with the martial artists,

from the platform.

“It seems I’ve neglected your desires too much. I never realized what you guys really wanted.”

In this world, you can’t get something without fighting for it.

This was the martial world.

The world considered to be the most primitive of them all.

Gongson Chun Gi grinned when he thought that. In this dog-eat-dog world, a strong man’s words were the law. And it seemed now was the time to establish who the stronger man was. They were waiting too long for this.

“We can’t just let them go when they came all the way out to our yard, can we?”

Are you ready to fight?”

The 5000 shouted in harmony when Gongson Chun Gi asked a question.

“Yes!”

Gongson Chun Gi faintly smiled when he heard the loud sound

ring throughout the area. When he felt the aura these guys were exuding, the last bit of hesitation left in his mind completely disappeared.

Gongson Chun Gi now exuded an extremely tyrannical aura, now that he had gotten rid of his hesitation. This aura slowly covered up the entire area, and began to twist upwards like a tornado.

“Good. Then let’s go show these fools of justice what real fear is.”

Once Gongson Chun Gi waved his hand, the martial artists all split in two to make a path in the middle. Gongson Chun Gi walked down that path, with Guardian Wu following him like a shadow. The moment Gongson Chun Gi walked out of the auditorium, the five thousand martial artists became a giant tempest that followed him.

The Gongson Chun Gi who lost hesitation. He would destroy anything that would get in his way. And that was something truly unfortunate for the Alliance.

“Amitabha.....”

The blotched hand that was rolling the rosary beads. That hand stopped for a moment, and began to tremble slightly.

“Teacher, is something wrong?”

The Shaolin Sect. They too were here for the war. They even brought one member of the 15 guests. The Buddhist King (佛帝), Godly Monk (神僧) Kongye (空夜). That man was looking forward with a dark face.

“.....So war is inevitable.”

The tyrannical killing aura that inhabited the air. There was an immense amount of it covering the whole area. After all, a battle of the century was about to take place.

“Everyone here is ready to fight.”

Kongye nodded, and began to pray once more. But after a short while, he opened his mouth.

“Mu Ho.”

“Yes, teacher.”

“If something happens, will you take our sect’s disciples and run?”

Mu Ho paused for a bit, and opened his mouth cautiously.

“What situation might the teacher be talking about.....?”

Kongye opened his eyes, and looked at his youngest disciple. The boy was very religious, and was full of intelligence. The boy held immense talent that outstripped all of the Shaolin sect. Because of that, Kongye couldn't allow this boy to die an early death.

“You'll see when the time comes.”

Mu Ho didn't understand, but stepped back anyways. That was because there was a matter that required more attention.

‘It's coming.’

From far away, he could see a massive black wave inching towards them.

‘The Demon Church.....’

Mu Ho tightened his fists once he thought of them.

The Demon Church. Even thinking of that word would make a martial artist tremble in fear.

‘Don't be scared.’

The Alliance had more people than the Demon Church. Plus, weren't all these people elites of the elites that were sent by countless clans within the Alliance? It didn't matter what the

motives of each of the clans were. They were all here for one purpose: To destroy the church.

The Alliance even had the Dao Emperor, the one known to be the strongest in the continent, and the hope of the Shaolin Sect, teacher Kongye. They held the advantage. There was no need to be scared.

But why was he still afraid?

‘I must be overreacting.’

Mu Ho shook his head. He looked forward after taking a deep breath. He could see, then. The five thousand martial artists in black. Mu Ho felt as if his heart was being squeezed when he saw this giant crowd of martial artists inch towards the Alliance. Then, he saw something.

The black wave. And the one standing in front of that wave. The giant presence that could be felt all the way here.

‘Could it be.....’

Mu Ho began to tremble. He was not the only one. Everyone near him began trembling, because of the person at the front of the black wave. The enormous power that exuded from that man. That power brought a single name in everyone’s minds.

‘Gongson Chun Gi!’

Mu Ho unconsciously stepped back, whilst screaming in his mind. There was indeed information that the Demon Emperor was going to be here. The mysterious expert hidden in the dark, shrouded by countless rumors.

He thought that the rumors about the man were all a lie. After all, the words used to describe the Demon Emperor simply seemed exaggerated.

But in reality, it seemed that even those words weren't enough to describe Gongson Chun Gi. Mu Ho's face began to turn pale.

'No way!'

This was a strength that no one could stand up against. How could a human actually become this strong?

"Can you see the Pope?"

".....Yes, teacher."

When Mu Ho said this with a trembling voice, Kongye stepped in front of him to block his sight.

"That man is not your enemy yet. Do not be afraid."

Mu Ho could finally calm down once his teacher stepped in front.

The Pope's presence from afar had felt like a giant mountain only moments ago. He felt like he was going to faint.

At that moment, someone from the Alliance began to walk forward. When that man did so, the immense presence that was present before began to subside.

“The Dao Emperor!”

When someone shouted that, everyone turned their heads.

That's right. If there was a Demon Emperor there. They had the Dao Emperor here. The Dao Emperor was walking forward with a gleeful smile. At that moment, the Alliance member's heads were filled with expectations.

‘Could it be? Could it be?’

Something that was only possible in dreams and stories. Two Sovereigns, the Dao Emperor and the Demon Emperor. There was finally a chance to see two of the sovereigns battle each other.

‘There can only be one sun in the sky.’

At the time where just about everyone in the Alliance thought of this. The black wave came very close to them. At this distance, with the martial artists' power, both sides were clearly able to make out each other's faces. The man assumed to be the Demon Emperor, raised his hand.

Bam—!

Every martial artist from the church slammed their foot down, and stopped. The ground shook for a brief second. What followed was a deathly silence that covered the battlefield.

The elites of the Alliance began to fondle their weapons in anxiousness as they faced those of the Demon Church.

The Dao Emperor began to walk forward. In a fight, a martial artist's spirit was extremely important. At a time like this, if he were to defeat the enemy leader, his force's spirit will rise to an astronomical level. And that spirit would serve to bring him victory.

The Dao Emperor began to send out a powerful aura from his body. That aura spread out like a layer of fog, that covered the whole field.

‘I have never lost in my lifetime.’

He had not lost once since he began learning swordsmanship. The strongest man under the heavens. That title was surely made for him. Why? Because no one in the world could take his strongest blow and survive. But in this world, there existed two people that could rival him. One of those two people was in front of him now.

‘Finally.....’

He was able to meet one of the sovereigns. His excitement couldn't be described by words. Just how long did he wait for this?

‘This is unfortunate.’

One thing. There was one thing the Dao Emperor regretted. It was the fact that his body was already well past his prime.

Everyone ages with time. And as one ages, the body gets weaker. Even if one trained the body to the point where even a sword wouldn't be able to penetrate the skin, after a certain period of time, even that body would get weaker.

The Dao Emperor, who was facing the Demon Emperor, was sad because of this. He wasn't afraid of being killed by a strong man. He was afraid of being unable to show his full strength to a strong opponent.

“An expert can measure a skill of his opponent just by seeing the man's shadow.”

The Dao Emperor's whisper. To Gongson Chun Gi, this whisper sounded like thunder in his ears.

“What do you think? Do you think you can win against me?”

The Demon Emperor, Gongson Chun Gi. He, too, began to walk towards the Dao Emperor. He had an annoyed expression on his face as he spoke.

“I can’t lose to an old man like you. If I lose, there’s someone who’d come climbing out of his grave to get me.”

Gongson Chun Gi thought of the message that his dead master was trying to say to him a long time ago, and smiled.

– The Alliance’s sword has a Ghost stuck onto it, so be very careful. Really, be very careful.

His teacher, who was famous for living life as he pleased, told Gongson Chun Gi to be careful twice. There really seemed to be something about the Alliance that was worth noting. But.....

Crack–

Gongson Chun Gi cracked his knuckles like a gangster. Indeed, the Dao Emperor Baek Mu Ryang lived up to his name. After all, Baek Mu Ryang’s aura was so powerful, a normal man would immediately lose the power in his legs and kneel when coming in contact with it. But unfortunately, Gongson Chun Gi was not a normal man.

“Meeting me would be your misfortune. Why? Because I’m going to fight seriously here. I’m not going to hold back, so be prepared.”

Gongson Chun Gi grinned after saying so.

This officially marked the first Alliance-Demon War.



Chapter 33. Nanman Beast Gate

Jo Gi Chun frowned as he tried to lift himself from the bed.

He couldn't feel anything in his right arm. From the shoulder to the finger. It felt like there was a useless lump of meat stuck to his shoulder.

Jo Gi Chun retraced his memories as he massaged his right arm.

‘An Imugi.....’

According to his knowledge, there was no way for a living being to live inside a formation.

As a formation was a space created by man, the space inside it was extremely unstable. It wasn't a place where a creature could live inside for a long period of time.

But...

There was one exception.

‘I need to confirm that.’

He had a reason to go back into the formation.

The right arm that had been taken by that guy. That act gave Jo Gi Chun some hope. If what he thought was right, he should be able to get his arm back.

Jo Gi Chun lifted his stumbling body, and leaned against the bed. And he soon made a confused face, as he didn't understand what was going on.

‘It’s too quiet.’

From the beginning, this place wasn't a very noisy spot, but it wasn't as quiet as this before.

When he stepped outside, he couldn't see a single person around. This was getting suspicious. Jo Gi Chun quickly walked over to the Building of Righteous Gathering. Thankfully, there was a person there.

“Is it alright if I ask you a question?”

A thin, middle aged man who had been inspecting documents previously, saw Jo Gi Chun and blinked a few times. Soon, the man began to get suspicious of Jo Gi Chun.

“Who are you, and why are you here?”

Jo Gi Chun made a troubled face when the middle aged man became alert towards him. How should he explain this?

After thinking a bit, Jo Gi Chun remembered the necklace he received from Gongson Chun Gi. The necklace shaped like a flame. Gongson Chun Gi told him to use it whenever he needed the church's help.

“Do you know what this is?”

Once Jo Gi Chun handed the man his necklace, the man's eyes widened. The man thought about something for a moment, then stood up and bowed respectfully towards Gongson Chun Gi.

“Is there a problem?”

It seems the necklace worked. Jo Gi Chun put the necklace back in his pocket, then opened his mouth.

“I have a question.”

“I will answer it to the best of my ability.”

“I can't find anyone here, did something happen?”

The middle aged man calmly spoke.

“His Holiness went to the Wisdom Plains today.”

“The Wisdom Plains!”

Jo Gi Chun finally realized why there wasn't anyone here.

The battle between the Heavenly Demon Church and the Alliance. This battle was to take place at the Wisdom Plains.

‘So it was today.’

Jo Gi Chun began to feel a bit uncomfortable the moment he realized that. That was because he thought of something ominous.

“W.. What happened to Ryu Hyang?”

The middle aged man thought for a second, then quickly responded.

“Could you be talking about Lord Cho Ryu Hyang?”

“Yes.”

“The young lord went out to the Black Skull Mountain this morning.”

The Black Skull Mountain. Ak Jung Pae's grave was there.

Once Jo Gi Chun realized this fact, his face turned pale. The

ominous feeling he had from earlier. That feeling seemed to be caused because of this.

“How long has it been since the boy went up the mountain?”

The middle aged man became a little surprised when Jo Gi Chun began acting this urgently.

“H.. He went out after breakfast, so about half a day has passed.....

Is there a problem?”

Jo Gi Chun wasn't listening any more. He was already dragging his old, tired body towards the Black Skull mountain as fast as he could.

[I want to be a dragon.]

An expected wish. The Imugi, who was looking down upon Cho Ryu Hyang, had a sort of a desperate look on its face.

[Little human, do you think you can you fulfill my wish?]

Dokun–

The thunder like heartbeat that was ringing in Cho Ryu Hyang's ear since a while back.

It wasn't his heartbeat. The sound was coming from the Imugi's heart.

[Don't be scared, greenhorn.]

Don't be scared? How can he not be scared in front of this giant, tyrannical being? It would be weird if he was actually calm.

[A real dragon is much bigger than this fellow. This guy is cute when compared to a dragon.]

When Cho Ryu Hyang heard the old man's words, he smiled. What an unamusing joke the old man was making.

But it seemed that the joke calmed Cho Ryu Hyang down a little. He let go of his chest, and opened his mouth cautiously.

“What should I do for you?”

The promise that Zhuge Liang made a thousand years ago. Cho Ryu Hyang was tasked with fulfilling that promise.

If one thought about it, Cho Ryu Hyang's first teacher was Zhuge Liang, not Jo Gi Chun. He learned about the Faultless view from Zhuge Liang, and acquired immense knowledge of mathematics.

Because of this, Cho Ryu Hyang was actually thankful that he got the chance to repay the old man. This wish, therefore, was one that Cho Ryu Hyang could not afford to decline.

The Imugi slowly opened its mouth while looking at Cho Ryu Hyang.

[In order to become a dragon and ascend, one needs a Dragon Ball.]

Cho Ryu Hyang nodded when the Imugi said that.

That's right. If you thought about it, every single one of the stories that has dragons never failed to mention a Dragon Ball.

That made everything simple. He just had to make a Dragon Ball out of the Reversed Scale that the Imugi had.

After all, didn't he have the Seizing Conversion Technique (捉換法)? Cho Ryu Hyang could essentially change the value of objects in this world to his fancy. It was a terrifying technique.

‘But the conditions in order to use it are too harsh.....’

Thankfully, it seemed like the conditions matched perfectly in this situation. He could see a red scale sending light out everywhere in front of his eyes. The Reversed Scale, which lay under the Imugi's chin. He just had to change the value of the scale, and change it into a Dragon Ball. It shouldn't be very hard.

When Cho Ryu Hyang walked forward in a relaxed manner, he was stopped by Zhuge Liang's voice.

[Don't take this lightly, greenhorn. Do you even know what a Reversed Scale is?]

Cho Ryu Hyang paused.

What was the old man trying to say? Cho Ryu Hyang didn't exactly know what a Reversed Scale was.

No, there was no way he'd know it in the first place. What'd he know about a Reversed Scale, when this was the first time even seeing an Imugi in his life?

[Only a dragon can possess a Reversed Scale. And at the same time, a dragon's only weakness is its Reversed Scale. In short, if you handle the scale without care, this guy might die.]

Cho Ryu Hyang frowned unconsciously.

Why? Why would the old man say this, especially when he just became prepared? Cho Ryu Hyang put on a complicated face.

Then, Zhuge Liang spoke to him with a low voice.

[Since that guy is determined to do this, I'm telling you to do the

same, greenhorn.]

Determination.....

Cho Ryu Hyang lifted his head, and took a look at the Imugi.

However, he immediately turned away, as he made eye contact with the Imugi.

‘This is.....’

Cho Ryu hyang felt that he was suddenly burdened with an immense task.

[I trust you, human. If anything goes wrong, it would be my fate, and not your mistake, so you don’t have anything to worry about.]

Cho Ryu Hyang swallowed his spit.

To be determined. He could really feel what that phrase meant.

The Imugi in front of him was prepared to die. Since Cho Ryu Hyang felt that determination of the Imugi in full force, he felt that he couldn’t really back down now.

[I stayed alive as a monstrosity that wasn’t either a dragon or an Imugi. I want to see an end to this now.]

Cho Ryu Hyang stayed quiet. He closed his eyes, and began to breath slowly.

‘As I thought, nothing is free in this world.’

Yes. Nothing in this world was free.

As he received something from Zhuge Liang, he had to give something back. Equivalent Exchange (等價交換). This was exactly that.

Cho Ryu Hyang forcefully calmed down his anxious heart, and grit his teeth.

His hands slowly took on a watery sheen. He was beginning to use the Seizing Conversion Technique.

“It’s quite a sight, brother.”

“Indeed.”

“It’s the Moon Edge Blade Technique, alright. To think that it could make the people of the mainland this active..... This really is a rare sight.”

The two men with coppery skin. The one who seemed to be the older one, the man with an arrogant face, opened his mouth while looking down from the hill.

“We got lucky. We managed to reel in some really big guys. Thanks to that, we got to see a giant battle like this.”

“Big guys..... you mean the Dao Emperor and the Demon Emperor?”

“Yes.”

“Does brother really believe that these people are as strong as the rumors say?”

The two men. They weren't from the central regions. They were from the far south. They were from the mysterious clan that was located in the region of Nanman.

Nanman Beast Gate (南蠻野獸門). They came from that clan.

“I don't believe in rumors. I only believe what I see with my eyes.”

The man with an arrogant face. He, the one known to have the most talent in the history of the clan, was the heir to the Nanman Beast Gate.

Gu Hui (嵒輝).

He spoke with a small smile on his face.

“I don’t know about the others, but these two are the real deal. I don’t think that even father could win easily against them.”

“Are they really.....”

“They really are that strong. I can’t even measure their power with my eyes. This really got interesting.”

Gu Hui’s younger brother, Gu Mun Ha (嵒纂夏), closed his mouth.

To him, his father was a living god. The living legend of Nanman who was regarded as a god. The man who was treated equally to his father, was his older brother.

Gu Hui.

The man destined to be the strongest of the world in the next generation.

Since a man like that was the one to say this statement, he could only believe it.

“I will..... confirm it with my own eyes.”

“That will be for the best.”

Gu Hui looked upon the Alliance and the Heavenly Demon Church from afar, and laughed on the inside. The one to find the Moon Edge Blade Technique was neither the Alliance, not the Heavenly Demon Church.

Gu Hui is Nanman Beast Gate. The one who wasn't even from the central regions, was the one to find traces of the legendary technique.

He even jumped into the formation on the tomb, fully aware of what dangers might lie inside.

‘Well, I managed to see something unbelievable, thanks to that.....’

He managed to go inside after struggling through the formation. The fact that he studied formations quite a bit helped him a lot. But the thing he saw inside was something that really was unbelievable.

‘Should I call it a dragon?’

Gu Hui was used to meeting nonhuman creatures. Thanks to that, he was able to look at the giant being without flinching.

He could see then. That thing wasn't a holy being like a dragon. It was just an Imugi that failed to ascend. He could remember the conversation he had with the Imugi that time.

[How unfortunate. You lack talent.....]

The thing truly became sad when it looked at Gu Hui.

He was lacking? Gu Hui scowled.

[You were not chosen. And therefore, you do not have the right to be here. Leave.]

Gu Hui stared at the thing with a straight face, and spoke.

“You say that I am lacking?”

[Yes. A little.]

“Then, do you believe that there is a human more talented than I?”

The thing laughed. It seemed to find all this amusing.

[Of course, arrogant human.]

He was destined to be an emperor since the day he was born.

Even a person like he was lacking?

Since this kind of a thing was new to Gu Hui, he just stood there looking at the Imugi. He soon laughed.

“How unfortunate.”

He thought about killing the Imugi, but that’s not how he worked. Then he thought of a more amusing idea.

“I hope you meet the one you want to meet.”

[I will. Soon.]

Gu Hui began to think after coming out of the formation. And the end result was this.

The Alliance-Demon war.

The reason for everything that was going on here, was the Nanman Beast Gate. The ones who had been hidden in the shadows for so long were finally baring their fangs.



Chapter 34. The Ascending Dragon

Baek Mu Ryang slowly pulled out his sword. The sword that had accompanied him in all the time that he spent in the Alliance. The sword that knew no defeat, was pulled out of the hilt.

White Tooth (白牙).

Once Baek Mu Ryang pulled out the sword, the surrounding air fluctuated a little. The energy of the battlefield was getting fiercer.

“You have the right to make me use this sword.”

“Should I be thankful?”

When Gongson Chun Gi responded with a somewhat sour face, Baek Mu Ryang shook his head.

“No, I should be the one thanking you. Anyway, I’m going to be using this child here. Don’t you have any weapon you’ll use?”

Gongson Chun Gi lifted his hands up a bit, and spoke.

“These are enough.”

“I knew it.....”

Even though Gongson Chun Gi was standing there with a relaxed position, it seemed like Baek Mu Ryang couldn't even get a needle through the Pope's defenses.

That's what Baek Mu Ryang liked. His blood was boiling after a long time.

‘And.....’

This guy was a bit different. There was something about the Pope that separated him from all the other enemies that Baek Mu Ryang faced in the past.

‘I don't exactly know what that ‘something’ is, though.’

The Dao Emperor stopped thinking there. There was no time to think such useless thoughts when battling an expert like this.

“There are so many people here. It wouldn't do if we disappoint them, yes?”

Voom–

Baek Mu Ryang's sword began to vibrate, then started to twist about like a living being. Gongson Chun Gi, seeing that, narrowed his eyes.

“Let's go easy for now.....”

The moment Baek Mu Ryang muttered that, his sword began to emit a bright light, and proceeded to disappear. When Gongson Chun Gi turned his head, something happened.

Pyut–!

A white-hot sword nicked Gongson Chun Gi's ear. Many of the martial artists who were watching this spectacle, shouted in surprise.

“Energy Control Technique (以氣御劍術)!”

Once a person trains his sword technique to the absolute limit, he/she can bring out a full potential of a sword in a fight. That was the Control Technique.

The Energy Controlling Technique was a level above the Control Technique. It was a technique that symbolized peak power. The martial artists who saw this amazing technique, became extremely excited.

“This guy's trying to kill me from the get go?”

Gongson Chun Gi smirked while saying this, and twisted his whole body. When he did so, a white sword passed by the place where he had been previously.

Baek Mu Ryang stopped attacking, then grinned at the Pope.

“How is it?”

“What?”

“Didn’t that act just now make a pretty good show for the audience? Seeing the Pope run everywhere must’ve been immensely satisfying for them.”

“Running..... Well, I guess idiots will see this that way.”

Gongson Chun Gi swept his messy hair upwards, and grinned.

“Don’t tell me you’re also thinking that?”

Baek Mu Ryang shook his head. He knew. His attack just now was only performed to measure Gongson Chun Gi’s strength. But his attacks didn’t really provide him with information, no matter how outstanding they looked.

But this little bit of information he gained served to make Baek Mu Ryang plenty excited.

‘His Mind Eye (心眼) is opened?’

The Energy Control Technique was as fast as swinging a sword at

point blank range. Managing to dodge that sword using the eyes was, in the first place, impossible.

That meant that the opponent would have to dodge using his/her instinct. But then, Gongson Chun Gi reacted to Baek Mu Ryang's sword half a beat before the sword struck.

Once Baek Mu Ryang thought of this, his grip on his sword got stronger. This man was worthy of being his opponent. No, this man was something more of a monster, contrary to what he had been thinking.

“Damn it, moving my body like this after such a long time made me tired.”

Gongson Chun Gi sighed while massaging his muscles. After a while, he spoke with a small voice.

“Anyways..... I guess it's my turn to show you something?”

“I'll look forward to it.”

Baek Mu Ryang gripped onto his blade, and exhaled. He was expelling all the negative energy from his body.

“Now, what should I use.....”

Gongson Chun Gi thought for a moment, then grinned like an

evil child.

“It would only be fair if I made you move as much as I just did, right?”

Everything began there.

Baek Mu Ryang lifted his blade in caution. At the same time, his sword tip touched something invisible.

Bam—!

Baek Mu Ryang, who had been pushed back significantly, wrinkled his brow. It was good that he blocked an invisible attack out of instinct.

But the power of this attack was stronger than he had expected.

‘An energy blast?’

But the energy contained in this attack was far stronger than a simple energy blast. While he was trying to think of what technique Gongson Chun Gi had used, he noticed the Pope smiling at him with a grin.

Baek Mu Ryang put on a strange face when he saw that. Come to think of it, the Pope didn’t get into any sort of an attack position when attacking.

“Don’t be surprised already. I’m just getting started you know.”

Gongson Chun Gi, who had his hands behind his back, moved his index finger a few times. Immediately, a sinister energy began to surround Baek Mu Ryang.

‘Hm!’

Baek Mu Ryang began to focus his energy into his sword tip. There was no way he was going to fall for the same trick twice. He soon released the energy he gathered into his sword outwards.

Babababang–!

The energy that was expelled outwards hit something invisible, and triggered an immense explosion. There was so much power, in fact, that the ground between the two sovereigns broke apart.

Only then could Baek Mu Ryang understand just what technique Gongson Chun Gi had used.

“Hidden Palm (隔空掌)!”

This, too, was a peak technique. When the martial artists all shouted out in surprise, Baek Mu Ryang disappeared.

He was moving. Like a mad tiger. Baek Mu Ryang snaked through

the invisible energy blasts attacking him, and was moments away from stabbing Gongson Chun Gi.

At that moment, the Dao Emperor felt a sting. His expression changed greatly.

‘Danger?’

Gongson Chun Gi was staring at him with a mysterious smile, without moving an inch. The man didn’t even flinch at him.....

Baek Mu Ryang grit his teeth. The instinct that developed after battling countless experts in the past warned him ceaselessly.

But his hesitation was short-lived. Baek Mu Ryang changed the course of his sword from a stab to a slice to attack his target.

Chiii–

A smell of burning air pierced the nose when Baek Mu Ryang sliced through empty space. At the same time, something managed to touch the tip of the sword.

Baam–!

Baek Mu Ryang was pushed backwards with great force. Even when being pushed away, Baek Mu Ryang grit his teeth and tightly gripped onto his sword. He almost let go of it because of the

immense force the explosion caused.

“Eh? You blocked that? But there’s no way you’d have seen that!”

Gongson Chun Gi tilted his head in confusion.

Gongson Chun Gi’s curious face soon turned into an excited one. Baek Mu Ryang then realized something. At the same time, he felt something hot come up from within himself.

It was rage.

‘I’m being underestimated? Me?’

That’s right.

Gongson Chun Gi seemed to look at Baek Mu Ryang with eyes filled with contempt. It was a look that Baek Mu Ryang usually gave to his opponents.

Grit–

Baek Mu Ryang grit his teeth. His relaxed aura slowly faded away. He soon looked at Gongson Chun Gi with an enraged face, and spoke.

“I’m sorry, Pope. It seems I played around a bit too much in front

of you. I'll take you on seriously from now."

Baek Mu Ryang began to emit a white, visible aura from his body.

Gongson Chun Gi made an irritated face when he saw Baek Mu Ryang's fierce aura. He could feel that the man was prepared to die. That wasn't something that he wanted to see.

'But.....'

He had to take it. Otherwise it would be rude towards his opponent. Gongson Chun Gi slowly put his hands in front of his body.

"Then I, too, will do my best."

Baek Mu Ryang's stiff face loosened a bit. He knew that his opponent was finally taking him seriously.

'Isn't this something that I always dreamed of?'

Dying to a strong opponent. That was something that truly made a martial artist happy. He had no regrets now.

Baek Mu Ryang's old heart began to beat vigorously again, just like it had in his youth. When Baek Mu Ryang put all his power into his sword, though, something happened.

He saw something strange in front of him.

‘What’s this?’

Baek Mu Ryang completely forgot about the opponent in front of him, and began to look at something else. When he saw it, he blinked a few times. He was trying to confirm if the thing he was looking at wasn’t an illusion of sorts.

Once he confirmed that it wasn’t an illusion, his jaw dropped down. Only then could Gongson Chun Gi feel that something was wrong.

“What? Is there something behind me?”

Gongson Chun Gi slowly turned back. He, too, repeated what Baek Mu Ryang had done previously.

No, he was worse. He started to stutter everywhere when he saw it.

“D, dragon? I, is that a dragon?”

Baek Mu Ryang nodded without realizing it.

Far away, at the peak of the mountain that barely anyone could see, was a column of light that extended all the way to the sky.

And in the middle of that light, was something that was slowly rising, twisting, into the sky.

Kuooo—!

Clouds, and lightning. The one that was slowly climbing through those was clearly a dragon.



At that moment, everyone at the Wisdom Plains was looking at the mountain. They all had the same expression plastered onto their face. Every one of them was staring at the dragon with a dumb face.

It was hard to believe. A dragon? An ascending dragon?

At that moment, something happened to the martial artists at the Wisdom Plains. Some of the martial artists from the Alliance began to move towards the place where the dragon was.

Gongson Chun Gi came to his senses when he saw that. At the same time, he felt a chill run down his spine. He knew the place where the dragon was.

Ak Jung Pae's tomb. That's where the dragon was ascending from.

‘Disciple, just what did you do over there.....’

Gongson Chun Gi began to get a little hasty when he thought of his disciple. Thanks to that, he lost his usual calm and made a command.

“Don't let them get to the dragon.”

Gongson Chun Gi instantly regretted what he said.

Everyone else who had been looking at the dragon came back to their senses, and began to move towards the mountain. The people of the Alliance, even though they haven't been commanded at all, simultaneously began to move.

Gongson Chun Gi's face turned stiff. The whole situation was getting very bad now. He couldn't do anything to reverse the whole situation.

“Damn it! Don't let any one of them get there! Block them!”

“Understood!”

Clearly, the people of the Heavenly Demon Church were elites. The moment Gongson Chun Gi gave out his order, they blocked the path to the mountain.

It would be hard to get through the path to the mountain when the only path to it was blocked completely. But that also meant that both sides would never be able to give up their position.

‘Damn it!’

The moment Gongson Chun Gi swore in his mind, the martial artists of the Alliance and the Heavenly Demon Church clashed.

Crack—!

Blood and flesh flew everywhere with an ominous sound. Gongson Chun Gi's face turned sinister when he saw that scene.

Chapter 35. The Little Monster

Humans can sometimes unleash unthinkable amounts of power. Like now.

Jo Gi Chun was running. He was running so fast, he even began to wonder where he was getting all this energy from. He ran as if his life depended on it, and eventually reached the Black Tooth Mountain.

Jo Gi Chun didn't stop thinking even when he was gasping desperately for air in front of the formation. Soon, he began praying.

‘Please, don't let me be too late.....’

The formation in front of him was clearly somewhat off.

It was strange that a creature was living inside it, and what made it stranger was the fact that that creature happened to be a dragon. The formation was simply a bag of mysteries.

‘But.....’

There were some clues that Jo Gi Chun managed to spot because of how strange the formation was. He began walking into the formation, whilst trying to calm his jumpy heart. There was no time to waste now.

The hypothesis he had thought of that could work. If it actually worked, he could manage to destroy the formation.

The only thing Jo Gi Chun didn't want happen was seeing his disciple fight that monster. Jo Gi Chun grit his teeth, and walked into the formation.

The world is made of numbers. That was the truth.

The Moon Edge Flower Algorithm Magic.

He met Zhuge Liang through that book, and once he realized the profound truth of numbers, his life had changed. His relaxed life as a young boy had disappeared completely.

‘I wonder what would've happened if I didn't come across that book?’

The present would be completely different from what was happening now. Cho Ryu Hyang quickly discarded his thoughts, and began breathing. He was using the Faultless view of the world. Right now, Cho Ryu Hyang was able to see the world in numbers. The world was covered in it.

‘Things will get important from here.’

Seizing Conversion Technique.

Cho Ryu Hyang stopped breathing. That was the only way to use this technique. And of course, that meant that he could not keep up using the technique for an extended amount of time.

Cho Ryu Hyang quickly extended his hand. He could touch the red-hot scale of the dragon, something that resembled hard, black steel. Cho Ryu Hyang's hands simply passed through the scale, as if the scale was made of tofu.

Grit-

He could feel the imugi trembling from pain.

The imugi was probably feeling an unspeakable amount of pain right now. Cho Ryu Hyang tried to ignore the imugi, and focused. When he did so, he could see something inside the scale. It was the true form of the Reversed Scale on the imugi.

‘This is.....’

Cho Ryu Hyang's eyes widened. The thing he was seeing right now wasn't the Reversed Scale. It was a giant mess of numbers. That was what was making him so surprised.

‘Damn it.’

Cho Ryu Hyang bit his lip. He finally found out why the Reversed

Scale was the ingredient for the Dragon Ball.

The numbers were too tangled. There was chaos to the likes of which he had never seen before. Just looking at it made Cho Ryu Hyang feel annoyed.

He couldn't figure out the heads or tails out of this mess. But he had to somehow untangle it.

‘There definitely is a pattern here.’

The numbers were all tangled up, but it did follow a certain pattern. Right now, Cho Ryu Hyang had to figure out what that pattern was. Only when he would use the pattern would he be able to create a Dragon Ball.

‘But.....’

Cho Ryu Hyang's face turned red. He was already running out of air. After all, his body was untrained, and unconditioned. He would naturally have not much time to hold his breath. That fact bothered him quite a bit.

‘I'll take a step back for now.’

Cho Ryu Hyang hesitantly pulled his hand out of the scale. He could feel the imugi trembling again. It looked like it was suffering a lot.

Cho Ryu Hyang tried to say something, but couldn't. He just stood there and started to calculate as fast as he could.

‘Damn it! Damn it!’

The mess of numbers he saw earlier. He couldn't find the answer from it immediately, so he decided to stuff all the numbers in his head for now

But even if Cho Ryu Hyang was extremely smart, he couldn't memorise all those numbers in that short of a time. But he somehow managed to cram all that information in his head.

Because of that, it was hard for him to think of anything else other than math right now. Even a moment ago, he almost lost the numbers in his head by getting distracted. He managed to barely avoid that situation, but he still felt a bit cold thinking about it.

‘I'll apologize later.’

Cho Ryu Hyang began to split the giant mass of numbers into smaller parts. At the same time, he began to drill the numbers into his head, so that he wouldn't forget it later.

Finding the answer to the problem, and memorising the original format the numbers were in.

He had to do these two things at the same time.

Cho Ryu Hyang put his hands up in the air while gritting his teeth. And he began to write something down on the air, without any utensils. It was as if he was writing something on paper.....

He was writing the numbers in his head midair, at incredible speeds. The amazing thing was, his left hand and his right hand were writing two different things. One hand was doing calculations, while the other was memorising. Cho Ryu Hyang was easily managing to do something that others would be astounded at.

‘First of all.....’

He had to find the head of this messy array of numbers. Cho Ryu Hyang’s face as he kept trying out different methods quickly went through many different changes.

At first, his face was one of annoyance, as he was trying to surpass his limits by calculating and memorising something so complicated all at once. But his face began to get calmer as time passed. Unlike his brain, that was being pushed to the limit, Cho Ryu Hyang’s face began to get more and more peaceful.



[He's getting more and more focused.]

Zhuge Liang quietly muttered to himself.

The boy really was focused. Right now, Cho Ryu Hyang forgot about the existence of the imugi in front of him, and even forgot about that he was in a formation. The war going on in his mind right now didn't allow him to remember such a thing.

Cho Ryu Hyang wouldn't even notice a thing if a lightning strikes right in front of his nose. That was how focused he was.

[I never saw a human that resembles you so much.]

Zhuge Liang simply smirked when the imugi said this.

[Tian Nu, do not compare me to a monster like this.]

[A monster.....]

[Yes. This boy is truly a monster. Even I cannot believe what I am seeing right now.]

Cho Ryu Hyang didn't slow down a bit, even while Zhuge Liang was talking.

Cho Ryu Hyang, when he neared the endpoint of his calculations, stopped writing in the air, and began to simply twitch his fingers. With a single twitch, he was solving countless equations he thought up of. He was reducing as much useless movements as possible.

The imugi and the old man kept watching the boy's spectacle with excitement.

What made this boy truly fearsome was the boy's focus. While

the boy's intelligence, and knowledge was could be considered as talent, those two qualities couldn't even match up to the boy's capability for focus.

As Cho Ryu Hyang got more focused, his calculations were getting faster. Something that was already so fast, was still getting even faster.

[Hoh?]

Zhuge Liang stared at Cho Ryu Hyang whilst fiddling with his fan.

The boy was skipping multiple steps when calculating. He added new knowledge to the knowledge he had previously, and using that newfound knowledge, created even more knowledge to absorb. And with this, Cho Ryu Hyang was able to utterly annihilate the equations that were coming at him.

This was quite an experience, even for Zhuge Liang.

‘I can see it.’

Cho Ryu Hyang could see the answer to the whole thing lying far away. That moment, every process in his body except for breathing paused. He was devoting all his energy into solving the thing.

Even though his eyes were wide open, the visual information he was taking in wasn't even being registered by his brain.

Cho Ryu Hyang was simply staring forward with a daze.

He could then begin to see something unique from the set of numbers in his mind. He could see numbers that were somewhat different from others. Numbers that didn't follow the pattern.

‘I found it!’

Cho Ryu Hyang managed to find the answer, and he wasn't about to let it go. He managed to chase down the thing that was trying desperately to escape his grasp. He finally had the answer in his hands.

That was when Cho Ryu Hyang returned to his senses. Once he found the answer, he could begin to see his surroundings again.

That was when he noticed that something was off. The imugi was looking at the entrance.

‘What's going on?’

How much time had passed? What happened?

His brain began to process everything that he had ignored while calculating, and Cho Ryu Hyang was bombarded with information of what had happened.

‘A vibration? Yes, there was a slight vibration.’

That’s right. There was a tiny vibration in the ground while he had been calculating. When he followed the imugi’s gaze after realizing the fact, his eyes widened.

‘Teacher?’

It was his teacher.

Jo Gi Chun was standing at the entrance with a tired face.

‘How did he get here?’

Even Cho Ryu Hyang was able to get through the formation, so it was of course possible that Jo Gi Chun would be able to enter.

While he didn’t possess Cho Ryu Hyang’s sight, Jo Gi Chun still was a master of formations. He probably got through the formation without much difficulty.

But this wasn’t a place where his teacher should be. Cho Ryu Hyang felt that this was going to get dangerous, so he blocked the imugi from approaching his teacher.

“Teacher!”

The imugi, who was about to swallow Jo Gi Chun whole, paused when he heard Cho Ryu Hyang's cry.

[You know this man?]

“He is my teacher.”

[Teacher.....]

Come to think of it, there was such a relationship in the human race. Was it something along the lines of “someone who resembles a parent”? The imugi stared at Jo Gi Chun for a while, then slid back to where it was previously.

Slide–

The black scales moved across like a beautiful wave.

Jo Gi Chun made a confused face when he saw the imugi's attitude.

But when he remembered something significant, his became astounded.

“You chose him? This boy?”

The imugi stared at Jo Gi Chun, and nodded.

[I chose him.]

Jo Gi Chun was stupefied. He recovered after a bit, and laughed loudly. He pulled out something from his sleeves.

“Then there was no need to bring this all the way here.”

Clack–

A sound of stones hitting each other. Jo Gi Chun had brought quite a bit of jewels from the Heavenly Demon Church. The imugi’s eyes brightened when it saw the jewels.

[You figured it out?]

Jo Gi Chun faintly smiled, and nodded.

“Indeed. I also figured out how to destroy it.”

Thankfully, the little hypothesis Jo Gi Chun had come up with about the formation had been correct.

The imugi stared at Jo Gi Chun without a word for a moment. Soon, it nodded slowly.

[You are quite worthy.]

The secret of the formation. The imugi didn't think anyone would be able to realize it in such a short time.

This human was amazing, wasn't he? The imugi kept thinking for a bit, then quickly inhaled.

The imugi's action seemed somewhat dangerous for some reason. When Cho Ryu Hyang looked at the imugi with a confused look, the imugi exhaled the air inside towards Jo GI Chun.

“Teacher!”

Cho Ryu Hyang's shout echoed throughout the cave. The imugi spoke while the boy was running towards his teacher.

[Don't be afraid. I simply gave back what I took from him.]

Cho Ryu Hyang remembered something when he heard those words, and opened his mouth with a hint of excitement.

“Can you move your arm?”

Jo Gi Chun, who had been thinking the same thing, carefully lifted his right arm, and nodded.

“I can move it, it seems.”

“That’s good. That’s really good, teacher.”

Jo Gi Chun spoke when Cho Ryu Hyang made a relieved smile.

“I’m the one who’s really relieved here. I feel relieved knowing that you are safe.”

“Teacher.....”

Jo Gi Chun tried to say something else, but dropped down onto the floor, as he had been too anxious just a moment ago.

“This is really relieving. I thought you were in terrible danger.....”

Cho Ryu Hyang didn’t need to hear any more. His teacher was worried about him.

Cho Ryu Hyang began to scratch the back of his head from guilt. Wasn’t he feeling the same thing a moment ago? He felt terrible when he thought that the imugi did something to his teacher.

“I’m safe, so don’t worry, teacher.”

“Yeah.”

Jo Gi Chun stood up.

His disciple was safe. That was all he needed to know.

Cho Ryu Hyang suddenly felt his curiosity rise, and smiled. He asked something to his teacher, as he couldn't just hold it in.

“Did you figure out how to destroy the formation?”

Cho Ryu Hyang only came here to destroy the formation by altering the formation's nucleus by using the Seizing Conversion Technique. He didn't know the actual destruction method of the formation. Jo Gi Chun simply smiled, and responded.

“It seems this formation is a little special in that it never existed in this world before.”

Cho Ryu Hyang's eyes glinted. His teacher knew about all the formations created in the world. When his teacher talked about a formation that never existed, he naturally got curious.

“Just what kind of.....”

Jo Gi Chun organized his thoughts, looked at the imugi, and talked.

“Look carefully. Can you see that the cave and the outside has a definite border between them?”

A border? Cho Ryu Hyang stared at the cave entrance, and nodded.

Indeed. The outside and the cave had a definite border between them.

“Don’t you realize something from that?”

Cho Ryu Hyang fell to deep thought when Jo Gi Chun said that. His teacher gave him a question, which meant that he could solve this on his own. What was the answer?

‘The border is definite?’

In a formation, a border was very important. It was what divided a border from the outside world. But then, why is there a such a clear border inside the formation itself?

Cho Ryu Hyang shouted in surprise when he thought that much.

“Ah!”

“Do you know the answer?”

Cho Ryu Hyang nodded, then quickly asked something.

“May I confirm it?”

“It would be good if you do.”

Cho Ryu Hyang walked all the way to the cave entrance unsteadily.

‘Is such a thing possible?’

If what he realized was possible, it would really be amazing. After looking at the entrance for a long time, Cho Ryu Hyang walked out and back. He then proceeded to simply freeze.

“You realize it now?”

“Yes. This formation..... it really deserves to be called the best under the heavens.”

Cho Ryu Hyang truly thought that. He looked at the imugi and spoke with a low voice.

“A formation that covers another formation..... in other words, a formation in a formation..... this is amazing.”

Making a single formation as intricate as this takes an incredible amount of work.

There were two of those here. Making them separately wouldn't be much of a problem, even for Cho Ryu Hyang.

But the problem was, one would have to put a formation inside another formation. The variables one would have to consider would increase indefinitely. Making something like this was outside the realm of man, which meant that this formation was created by that imugi.

[Should I keep waiting?]

Cho Ryu Hyang came to his senses. Didn't he have something to do? Cho Ryu Hyang desperately hid his face of reverence and respect, and began to steady his breath in front of the imugi.

'I have to finish this in one go.'

He couldn't let the imugi go through that much pain again. Cho Ryu Hyang prepared himself to finish everything in one go, and grit his teeth.

Chapter 36. The Dragon's Gift

[The time is now.]

Soon, the thousand years of waiting will finally be over.

The imugi looked down at Cho Ryu Hyang. Cho Ryu Hyang, too, was looking at the imugi. It was the appointed time, but it wasn't guaranteed that the gates of heaven would open. Even an imugi that lived for thousands of years wouldn't be able to predict that.

But there was one thing that was clear. This was the last chance for the imugi.

[Start]

Cho Ryu Hyang nodded. He stopped breathing, and extended his hands outwards.

He was putting his hands inside the Reversed Scale.

Crack–

The scale let out a horrific sound. And when Cho Ryu Hyang heard it, he became a little confused.

‘The array is different?’

The order of the numbers were slightly different from the original. What happened? Did he memorize wrongly?

He could hear Zhuge Liang talk in his mind.

[Trust your calculations, greenhorn. Don't be intimidated just because its outer appearance changed a bit. After all, the true form of this thing never changed.]

Cho Ryu Hyang came back to his mind.

Didn't he see the true form of the Reversed Scale a while back, and found the answer from it? The numbers in the Reversed Scale might've moved around a bit, but there was no time to be concerned about that.

'I need to finish this as quick as possible.'

Anxiety made Cho Ryu Hyang hurry. His hands inside the scale began to move around quickly. The hands mixed the numbers around, or gathered unneeded numbers to throw them away.

Every time Cho Ryu Hyang made such a move, the imugi trembled as if struck by lightning. Cho Ryu Hyang could clearly feel the imugi's pain.

'A little more.....'

Cho Ryu Hyang grit his teeth. His face was turning red from holding his breath, but the moment before he reached his limit, he managed to carve out something out of the Reversed Scale. It was a glowing ball of light. When he unknowingly stretched his hand out to the ball, he could hear something.

Dokun–

A sound of the heartbeat. Cho Ryu Hyang, who forgot to even breathe, stared at the sphere in his hand.

‘This is.....’

It was a Dragon Ball. A ball that was emitting a golden light. When he brought the ball outside the scale it was in, the whole cave began to tremble.

Krrr–

The ceiling shook, and the ground trembled violently as if it was enraged.

The cave and the Dragon Ball were rejecting each other.

[Thank you, human.]

The imugi looked upon the Dragon Ball in the boy’s hands with a

face of happiness. The Dragon Ball started to slowly lift up into space. While Cho Ryu Hyang and Jo Gi Chun was looking at that with a daze, the imugi ate the ball.

Kiiing–

A bright light, resembling that of the sun, suddenly shone out of the imugi's mouth with a sharp noise.

“Mm…….”

Cho Ryu Hyang closed his eyes on reflex. When he opened them, his mouth fell in surprise. The Dragon Ball, which was previously the size of a child's fist turned into a giant globe that fit the imugi's mouth.

[The promise was fulfilled.]

When the imugi said that, its body began to emit a 5-colored light. This light covered the entire cave, and even stretched all the way to the ceiling.

Kwaaang–!

The beam of light stretched all the way to the sky. When it did so, heaven immediately responded. An immense amount of rain and thunder began to descend.

Kraam–!

The imugi smiled while getting drenched in by all the rain. Unlike the past, the gates of heaven opened this time.

[Finally.....]

It's been a long time.

Crack–

It writhed once, and its black scales fell apart to reveal the divine, golden scales hidden beneath. The reddish horns soon turned milky white, and the imugi was filled with energy. Its size expanded by three times. The imugi, who turned big enough to fill the entire cave, made a confused face.

‘The transformation isn't over?’

Normally, an imugi's transformation would end here.

But the body kept sending strange signals. There was something at the back, itching to get outside.

The imugi thought for a bit. Should it try to ascend now, ignoring that itch? Or should it accept the changes the body is trying to go through?

It didn't think for too long. The imugi inhaled, and put its power into its back. It decided to go through the changes at once, and then ascend.

Kriik- Crack-

The imugi felt violent pain in its back as the flesh and scale torn apart. But the pain didn't last long. Soon, it felt a cool, comforting sensation run in its body.

“Ah.....”

“Ha.....”

Cho Ryu Hyang and Jo Gi Chun both signed in amazement. Zhuge Liang, who saw the spectacle, whispered under his breath.

[.....You became an [Yinglong](#)?]

It was a legendary divine creature (神獸), the king of dragons, whose power was so strong that it could encompass the whole world.

The imugi, who had frowned just a moment ago, became a little confused when it finished transforming. It had a pair of bat wings on its back. The imugi knew what this meant more than anyone.

Flap-

When the wings were spread open, it covered the entire cave.

The imugi. Tian Nu seemed to be in a daze for a moment. Its life as a suffering imugi was coming back to it in a flashback. Then, it suddenly looked down on Cho Ryu Hyang from the middle of the beam of light, and opened its mouth.



[You have the right to take what is sealed inside here.]

Something sealed inside?

The imugi smiled mischievously as Cho Ryu Hyang made a confused expression.

[It will be a perfect reward for you.]

That was all it said. Cho Ryu Hyang, who was about to ask a question, had to block his ears. That was because the imugi looked up at the sky, and began to shout.

Kwauung–!

Dragon Chant (龍吟).

That was the name of the sound that a dragon makes before ascending. When the dragon let out that sound the sky and the earth both began to let out a sound.

Voom–

Cho Ryu Hyang became shocked by the fact that his body, too, was letting out a sound. The imugi that became a dragon let out that sound for a while, then began to flap its wings.

Foom–

The wings let out a sound of cool, refreshing air that couldn't be heard by any wind. Tian Nu began to ascend. It was ascending up

to the heavens, piercing through thunder and lightning.

Kurururung—!

The divine dragon that was ascending to heaven. That sight gave a feeling that couldn't be explained by words. Jo Gi Chun and Cho Ryu Hyang looked at the sight from down below. They were looking at it until the last remains of the dragon completely disappeared. Just how much time had passed?

Shuaa—

The dragon already ascended, but it was still raining. Jo Gi Chun and Cho Ryu Hyang weren't minding the rain, however. They were in too much of a daze to even notice it. When the column of light disappeared, and the surroundings were filled with the sound of the rain, Jo Gi Chun spoke.

“The pond is dry.”

Cho Ryu Hyang took his glasses off, and turned his head. He was immediately greeted by a dried up pond. And at the middle of that pond was a small box.

“That must be the reward the imugi mentioned.”

“Yes.”

Just what was inside? Cho Ryu Hyang and Jo Gi Chun approached the box.

They took the box, and brought it under a part of a stone cliff where there was no rain.

“I’ll open it.”

Jo Gi Chun nodded when Cho Ryu Hyang spoke.

Was this really something the imugi, no, the dragon left behind? When he opened the box with excitement, he could see a single book, and a purple orb that was filled with cracks.

『Moon Edge Blade Technique (月刃刀法)』

The name that was written on the book. Cho Ryu Hyang realized that this was the book that Gongson Chun Gi mentioned a while ago.

‘Didn’t he say about 10,000 people were fighting for the acquisition of this book?’

The book was that valuable.

“The Pope will be happy.”

“Yes.....”

Wasn't this something that Gongson Chun Gi was desperately trying to get? Cho Ryu Hyang did not care about how much value this book held, but still put it in his pocket.

The problem was the ball. Cho Ryu Hyang looked at the ball that was emitting purple light, and then looked at Jo Gi Chun.

“What's this?”

“I don't know.....”

It was something that the imugi gave him. Something that the imugi gave as a reward. It probably was something profound.

“I'll just take it for now.”

“Sure.”

Cho Ryu Hyang grabbed the orb with his bare hands.

Pachi-!

“Eh?”

He felt a little spark. When Cho Ryu Hyang reflexively tried to

pull back, the purple orb emitted a bluish-purple lightning that came at him.

Pachichichi-!

The lightning mercilessly pierced through Cho Ryu Hyang's body.

“Uu... uaaaa!”

“Ryu Hyang!”

Jo Gi Chun ran to the boy with a surprised face, but the only thing he could do was to stop the boy from falling.

“J, just what.....”

Jo Gi Chun had a serious expression on his face. Cho Ryu Hyang was currently trembling, as if he was struck by real lightning. And seeing that the boy's body jerked violently every now and then, the boy took a serious blow. While Jo Gi Chun was making a confused face, someone came up from the ground.

“W, what happened? What happened to the young lord?”

Jo Gi Chun became surprised by the man who came out of nowhere, but soon settled down once he realized that this man was someone he knew.

It was the Guardian of the Heavenly Demon Church, Ju Sang San. The man looked dirty and miserable, but seeing the man's face made Jo Gi Chun feel relieved.

“I don't know. He touched a strange orb and fainted.”

“Just a moment, please.....”

Ju Sang San quickly examined the boy's pulse, and frowned.

‘What's this?’

The pulse was irregular. It seemed that the body was shocked by something powerful. And that pulse wasn't very strong, either. Ju Sang San made a stiff face, and opened his mouth.

“Let's head back to the base.”

“Yes. Let's.”

When Ju Sang San took Cho Ryu Hyang on his back and tried to leave, however, he sensed something. Ju Sang San looked back. There was someone there.

“Eh? What's this? I found a bigger fish than expected?”

Ju Sang San frowned. There was a smiling young man in white clothes in front. That man was a person everyone would know if they were involved in martial arts. It was one of the member of the fifteen guests.

Ju Sang San ground his teeth as he talked.

“Lion Sword King? What the hell are you doing here?”

The one who was to inherit the Alliance after the Dao Emperor, the Lion Sword King Yu Sul Bin, appeared.

What made everything worse was the fact that the man didn't come alone. The seven elders who were slowly approaching them in a slow trot. Seeing them made Ju Sang San's face twist greatly.

‘Damn it, he brought the Martial Seven Stars, too?’

The Alliance had seven experts that were extremely close to getting to the Harmonious Stage. That was the Martial Seven Stars, the hidden force of the Alliance. To think that all seven of them would be here.

‘What should I do?’

Ju Sang San quickly tried to think of something. If he tried to escape here alone, he probably could. But with the young lord?

‘Can I do it?’

He would barely make it. When he thought that much, though, he realized that there was Jo Gi Chun, too.

But then.

“Don’t worry about me.”

When Jo Gi Chun said this, Ju Sang San could feel a chill go down his spine. He turned back to stare at Jo Gi Chun in shock.

“I lived enough already. Just think of letting this boy live.”

“.....”

This old man was already prepared for death, even before he said anything, huh? Ju Sang San’s face became complicated, but he soon just smirked.

“Don’t look down on me like that.”

Ju Sang San carefully lay Cho Ryu Hyang on the ground. He gave up entirely on escaping. But he couldn’t let himself be killed easily. Ju Sang San turned around, and grinned.

“Just what did you come here for, anyways? Lion Blade King.”

Yu Sul Bin smiled. While Ju Sang San was thinking of what to do, he, too, was scanning the area with his sense, and made sure that there was no one around.

Ju Sang San, the Blood Sound Demon. Other than that old man, there was no one else to be worried about. This was almost a chance given to him from heaven. If he lost this one chance to kill that old man, just how many more would that old monster kill?

“Don’t you know why?”

Yu Sul Bin looked around the wrecked surroundings, and grinned.

“Where’s the goods? I’ll kill you without pain if you just give me that.”

“Goods? What goods?”

When Ju Sang San pretended to not know anything, Yu Sul Bin exploded in a fit of laughter.

“Puhah! Let’s not make this any more complicated, yeah? You know what I’m talking about.”

It seemed that this guy already knew everything. He probably came knowing that this was the tomb of Ak Jung Pae.

Ju Sang San shouted with an angry face.

“You bastard. You really don’t have any manners, eh? Don’t you have to show at least some respect to your elders? Just what do they teach over there at the Alliance?”

Yu Sul Bin laughed. It seemed that he was dumbfounded by Ju Sang San’s words.

“Kukuku, I’m not low enough to pay respects to a small fry from the Demon Church, you see.”

“You... you really are brave to the point of idiocy.”

“Of course. I’d have no problems handling you alone, but I also have the elders from headquarters, too. It wouldn’t make sense if I wasn’t feeling particularly brave.”

It was all true. Ju Sang San could only swear in his mind, and look for an opening.

Then. Jo Gi Chun, who had been doing something on his own this whole time, whispered to Ju Sang San.

“After three seconds, run forward.”

What’s this? Did that old man have a plan?

“One.”

Ju Sang San was torn. Should he trust Jo Gi Chun and move?

“Two.”

Jo Gi Chun was slowly counting, disregarding Ju Sang San's thoughts on the matter. Yu Sul Bin, who was looking at them, spoke with a confused face.

“By the way, who's that kid and the old man over there? Do you know them?”

“Three.”

The moment Jo Gi Chun uttered that word, Ju Sang San shot forward like an arrow.

“Shit! Fuck! Damn!”

He decided to trust Jo Gi Chun.

Chapter 37. The Alliance's Attack

Normally, making a formation required meeting many conditions.

One had to take geography, temperature, wind, and time into consideration when activating a formation.

And that wasn't all. The formation had to be drawn perfectly.

A perfect circle. In order to draw that, formation experts usually had to carry a large amount of tools along with them to draw.

Jo Gi Chun was also like that in the beginning. But that was a long time ago. When he learned that formations could be made with math, he also acquired some shortcuts that let him bypass many of the annoying requirements when making formations.

And recently, his formation creation skills were boosted significantly once again when he met Cho Ryu Hyang.

Craack–!

The earth began to wave like a body of water, then began to crack all over the place.

That was the beginning. Yu Sul Bin, when he saw this, stopped grinning, and became alert.

“What’s..... this?”

A giant tree began to grow all of the sudden.

A silver tree that pierced the earth. It instantly grew tall enough to block the light from the sun.

While Yu Sul Bin was looking at this spectacle with a stupid face, one of the seven old men spoke with amazement.

“Ho, this is amazing. I never saw one of this type before.”

“Uncle Feng Ho Zi, do you know what this is?”

“Hah? You don’t know what this is?”

“I don’t. Just what type of magic might be this terrifying?”

When Yu Sul Bin asked this, the old man shook his head when answering.

“This isn’t magic. It’s a formation.”

“What? A formation? This?”

Yu Sul Bin became puzzled.

The formations he knew about wasn't this amazing. The old man who answered him moments ago, looked around some more, and opened his mouth in astonishment once again.

“Yes. It seems that an extremely skilled formations expert was with the Demon Church.”

“Can't you do anything about this?”

The old man with a long beard. He was a person who was skilled in all kinds of things, and was the one who took care of the temple at the Alliance. In short, this old man was very talented. But even he simply made a troubled expression right now.

“I don't think I can. The difference between the creator and I is too big. Plus, it seems that we are already trapped inside.”

Yu Sul Bin frowned. Feng Ho Zi was a respected formations expert in the Alliance. If even he said that, then there really was no way to destroy this formation.

Come to think of it, that old man behind the Blood Sound Demon. That man was doing something behind the old demon's back. That old man was probably the one behind all this.

“Goddamned Demon Church Bastards.....”

While Yu Sul Bin was just standing there gritting his teeth, the first transformation took place.

Koom–

The silver tree that seemed to grow endlessly soon stopped. When Feng Ho Zi saw this, he grew worried.

“Be careful. If I’m right, this should be…….”

He didn’t need to continue. That was because the thick roots of the tree began to wriggle around, and move.

Krrr–

“Uwah! What’s that?! It’s disgusting!”

When Yu Sul Bin made a horrified face, Feng Ho Zi opened his mouth.

“Even though everything here’s an illusion, if it’s this well made…….”

Bang–!

Feng Ho Zi and Yu Sul Bin stopped talking, and moved sideways.

There was a tree root the size of a giant's arm stuck in the place where they were moments ago.

When Yu Sul Bin saw the floor that got pierced quite deeply by the root, his face turned stiff.

“We'll have to expect at least a broken limb when getting hit by one of those roots.”

“Damn it.”

Yu Sul Bin fondled his sword's hilt. He should've known that everything was going too smoothly.

To think that the tables would be turned on them like this. Yu Sul Bin quickly looked around, all the while swearing in his mind.

Bam– Bang–!

The tree roots were constantly assaulting Yu Sul Bin and the uncles, but it wasn't much of a problem.

It would be dangerous if they got hit, but they weren't sitting ducks. To them, the tree roots were simply an annoyance.

‘But.....’

The one that worried him was Ju Sang San, who somehow hid himself during all the confusion. That old demon was the biggest problem here.

‘Damn, where is he?’

Because he got so shocked by the formation, he missed the old demon slipping away under his nose.

He regretted it greatly, but the past has already passed. Now, all he could do was to take care of everything as fast as possible. Yu Sul Bin stretched his senses to the limit as he dodged the roots.

‘I have to find him as fast as I can.’

He was in a disadvantageous situation, but he was still prepared to meet Ju Sang San head on when the old demon came.

After all, he was an expert at the harmonious level. Something like an ambush simply won’t work against him.

But there were his uncles. They didn’t step into the harmonious stage yet, so if Ju Sang San ambushed them, they would probably get heavily injured.

Because of that, Yu Sul Bin had to focus on finding Ju Sang San, and protect his uncles all at the same time.

Then.

Shwiik–

Yu Sul Bin heard something streak towards him, and quickly swung his sword.

Kang–!

A small pebble was thrown at him. Yu Sul Bin quickly turned and ran towards the direction the stone came from, but stopped just as fast. Realising something, he then began to run back while screaming at the top of his lungs–

“Uncle Feng So Zi!”

Feng So Zi. He became alert when he heard Yu Sul Bin’s voice after dodging a tree root.

“Too late.”

A small shadow jumped towards Feng So Zi. Feng So Zi became surprised, but he still managed to instinctively stab his sword at the shadow.

But even so, a rushed attack like that would never work against a harmonious expert. Ju Sang San softly pushed away the sword that was coming at him, and punched.

Crack–!

Feng So Zi's knees bent powerlessly. At the same time, his body quickly fell downwards to the floor.

“Son of a bitch! I'll kill you!”

Yu Sul Bin quickly struck towards Ju Sang San.

A white-hot sword. As expected of a disciple of the Dao Emperor, Yu Sul Bin's sword was filled with white energy.

Chii–!

Ju Sang San, who expected all of this to happen prior, simply smiled and dodged the blade.

“Your uncle is not dead yet, idiot.”

Yu Sul Bin paused when he heard the old demon's voice.

And there he saw the uncle, who was suffering from two broken legs. Only then did he realize what Ju Sang San was trying to do, and trembled in rage.

“You goddamned demon.....”

Ju Sang San was a seasoned veteran. He knew how to take on multiple enemies in a battlefield like this.

He wouldn't kill his victims even when he had the chance. Instead, he would make them be unable to move, which would force the victim's comrades to take care of the victim.

The victim would become a dead weight to the whole group.

“Son of a bitch.....”

Yu Sul bin grit his teeth.

This was dangerous. With a injured person in the battlefield, the risks the others would have to take would rise significantly.

This just meant that Ju Sang San's chances of victory were just increasing. This really was the perfect way to fight.

“Aren't you going to chase me?”

Ju Sang San sent an energy blast at Yu Sul Bin, then stepped back, and smiled evilly.

“Then just wait. I'll kill every single one of you as fast as I can.”

Yu Sul Bin, who was about to give chase, stopped. If he chased the old demon, there was no telling what would happen to the uncles.

‘The is the beginning, novice.’

Survival of the fittest, a dog-eat-dog world.

A place where that phrase fit in perfectly was the Heavenly Demon Church. Ju Sang San, having lived there his whole life, was very used to battlefields like this.

What he had gone through in the past was much worse than what was happening here. Because of that, Yu Sul Bin, who had been living in a much more comforting environment in the past, couldn’t hope to fight against Ju Sang San.

“Don’t worry about Feng So Zi. We’ll take care of him.”

Yu Sul Bin nodded with a stiff face when Feng Ho Zi came to get the injured uncle.

“I’ll leave him in your care.”

“Just go kill the demon.”

“I was just about to.”

Pshh–

Yu Sul Bin sliced the tree root that was coming for his head, blood red tree sap splattered on his body.

Yu Sul Bin made a ferocious face with the blood-red sap on him. Right now, he was extremely mad at himself. He thought he got tricked by Ju Sang San.

‘Just because of a damn pebble.....’

He became so alert, that his body responded to the pebble unconsciously. Because of that mistake, one of the uncles lost two legs.

A regretful mistake.

‘I’m not going to fall for it twice.’

Yu Sul Bin grit his teeth, and widened his senses. Ju Sang San, who was watching all this from afar, just grinned.

‘You really think this same trick isn’t going to work twice in a row?’

Ju Sang San could clearly see what that boy was thinking. Even though their skill levels were about the same, in terms of experience, Ju Sang San outstripped Yu Sul Bin by far.

Ju Sang San smiled as he cooked up a strategy to take care of the boy.

‘Come to think of it, this really is amazing.’

Ju Sang San looked at the giant silver tree in the middle with a look of amazement. This situation here really was a heaven-sent opportunity.

He knew that Cho Ryu Hyang’s teacher was skilled in formations, but he didn’t realize that the man could do something so amazing like this.

If even he was surprised by this, just how surprised did those guys get? It was probably something like a sucker punch to the face.

‘They’ll be safe in there, right?’

The silver tree.

Young lord Cho Ryu Hyang and Jo Gi Chun probably lay there. And that was probably the safest place in the whole formation.

‘By the way, just what is this tree made of?’

He didn’t know what this tree was, but it wasn’t normal. The

tree was barely scratched after taking quite a lot of blows from just about everyone.

And then there was Yu Sul Bin, who cut a whole root with a single slash. That was something to be alert about for sure.

‘So, how shall I attack next.....’

Ju Sang San evened out his breath as he thought. He was trying to hide his presence.

Bang–!

Feng Ho Zi dodged a tree root to the side, and thought for a moment. There was something he didn’t understand going around here.

‘This is strange.’

The fact that there existed an amazing formation like this. That in itself was amazing, but there was something else that was even more surprising.

‘How can a single formation perform two different tasks?’

A normal formation would usually perform simple tasks with a single objective. For example, killing everyone in the formation.

If there was a command like that, the formation would try to indiscriminately kill everything inside. In the beginning, Feng Ho Zi thought that this was the case.

But that wasn't it. Only the people from the Alliance were being targeted. Ju Sang San hasn't been targeted by a tree root a single time this whole moment.

This was weird. In the beginning, a formation didn't even have the power to distinguish different humans.

But from what he was seeing right now, the formation was doing just that. After thinking some more carefully, Feng Ho Zi opened his mouth with a serious face.

“Sul Bin.”

“.....”

“Yu Sul Bin.”

“.....Yes?”

Yu Sul Bin, who wasn't hearing anything because he was so concentrated, quickly came back to his senses and looked at the uncle.

“What is it?”

“That place. It’s suspicious.”

Yu Sul Bin followed the uncle’s gaze. He soon opened his mouth with narrowing eyes.

“.....You’re right.”

The silver tree. While looking at the tree’s center, Yu Sul Bin nodded.

Right then, Feng Ho Zi nodded.

“It looks like the nucleus of the formation would most likely be in here.”

“The nucleus?”

“Yes. As long as that’s gone, the formation would be destroyed.”

“Oho?”

They didn’t have the power to destroy the formation based on skill. But they did have the power to destroy it with brute force.

“But if I move, that guy’s going to come for you.”

Feng Ho Zi knew that. But there was no time to just wait and do nothing. That would just cause more damage.

“It wouldn’t be good if we just dragged time, either.”

“Mm.....”

Yu Sul Bin furrowed his brows, and began to think. He had to choose. After a while, he slowly opened his mouth.

“We’ll have to sacrifice..... a bit.”

“Amitayus.....”

While everyone was nodding, and praying at the same time, Feng So Zi, who had a painful expression plastered onto his face, spoke.

“.....Just leave me here.”

Yu Sul Bin shook his head.

“We can’t do that.”

“I don’t want to be a burden to all of you.”

Yu Sul Bin’s face became red when he heard Feng So Zi’s words.

“Are you telling us to become monsters that leaves one of their own behind to die? We can’t leave you here!”

“But.....”

“That kind of a thing is something that only the Demon Church does! Don’t say anything anymore. You just have to go back with us in one piece.”

Yu Sul Bin said this, and piggybacked Feng So Zi onto his back. He then took off his belt, and used it to tie him and Feng So Zi together.

“I’ll take care of uncle’s life from now. If you die, I die. So don’t say anything else about leaving people behind.”

“Nephew.....”

Feng So Zi made a pained face, but Yu Sul Bin’s mind was already set. And now, a fierce battle was to take place.

But at the same time, thanks to Yu Sul Bin’s choice, everyone else in the group was letting out an extremely fierce aura.

They all became united as they prepared their minds for death.

“Let’s go.”

“Yes.”

The silver tree.

The experts of the Alliance began to move towards its center.



Chapter 38. The Last Lesson

Cho Ryu Hyang dreamed. In the dream, he had become a small butterfly.

‘What’s this?’

It was a strange dream. He remembered becoming unconscious after touching the purple orb, but to think that it would make him have such a strange dream..... While Cho Ryu Hyang was complaining quietly in his mind, what he was seeing in front of him changed drastically.

He was a small butterfly with white wings. Cho Ryu Hyang flapped his wings, and looked around. This was a place filled with a lot of people. And he could see some familiar faces in their midst.

‘Teacher!’

Gongson Chun Gi. The Pope of the Heavenly Demon Church came in his sight first. Even in a crowd of people like this, it was impossible to hide the man’s presence.

Cho Ryu Hyang. He flapped his white wings in joy and tried to approach his teacher, then stopped midway.

‘Teacher.....’

His teacher was furious.

‘Hey..... old man.’

Gongson Chun Gi slowly turned his head, and looked at Baek Mu Ryang.

“Was this what you really wanted?”

One clash. Just one clash between the two sides already caused tens of people to die. The blood of the young martial artists ran down the battlefield.

The whole place was filled with the sounds of their screams and ceaseless fighting. They were in a situation that Gongson Chun Gi desperately wanted to avoid.



“Answer me!”

Baek Mu Ryang’s serious face didn’t change one bit. He prepared himself for the final attack, and opened his mouth.

“Sacrifice is inevitable in order to get rid of evil. And the people here were already prepared to die from the start.”

“What? Evil?”

“The Heavenly Demon Church is like a poisonous snake. We are

prepared to sacrifice anything in order to get rid of you people from the world.”

Gongson Chun Gi smiled. The two sides of his lips twisted upwards to form a smile. But his eyes were not smiling at all.

“Did you just call us a poisonous snake?”

“Yes. The Heavenly Demon Church is something that must be erased for the good of the world. Don’t you know that?”

Gongson Chun Gi smiled. That guy truly believed that the church was something evil. It was nonsensical. That man’s logic made no sense at all, which made this all too funny.

“Ku, kuku, kuhahaha!”

Gongson Chun Gi laughed. He looked up towards the sky, and laughed. After a while, he abruptly stopped laughing, and opened his mouth.

“To think that there was a person as stubborn as my teacher. It’s funny.”

Gongson Chun Gi’s body began to release a completely different aura than before. It was a blood-red aura, a very dense and violent one, at that.

“I don’t have time, so I’ll show you my real power. You should be honored to see this.”

Gongson Chun Gi fondled his black bracelet on his right arm as he spoke. He slowly took off the bracelet, and talked.

“I wouldn’t have time to restrain myself after this..... So if I were you, I’d run right now.”

“That’s quite insulting.”

“It’s an advice, you idiot.”

Psha–

Baek Mu Ryang jumped backwards, as he got assaulted by his enemy’s violent aura. He gripped his swords tightly, and looked forward. What he saw, surprised him greatly.

‘T, this.....’

It made Baek Mu Ryang feel unnerved. Gongson Chun Gi’s gray hairs slowly began to turn black again. That wasn’t all. Gongson Son Chun Gi’s body, which was full of wrinkles, began to expand, making him look young and powerful again.

Crack, snap–

The muscles rapidly reconstructed itself. Bones were being put in place again. Gongson Chun Gi was changing at a frightening pace.

‘This isn’t possible!’

Wasn’t this the legendary Rejuvenation effect (返老還童)?

“Hehe…….”

Gongson Chun Gi, ignoring his opponent right beside him, exhaled, then grinned.

“This doesn’t feel so bad.”

He hadn’t felt this way in a long time. Just how much did he suffer from suppressing his power in all the time? When he let his power out like this, it felt heavenly. Within moments, his body was bursting with immeasurable power.

“You said we were evil, right? Fine. I’ll show you what a real demon is like.”

“…….”

Baek Mu Ryang grit his teeth. Come to think of it, he heard of something a long time ago. The reason why the Heavenly Demon Church did not fall, even with everyone on the continent persecuting them. A power unrelated to neither religion nor

devotion. The power that stood above everything else.

‘Shura Environment!’

It was a martial art that only the Pope could learn. Everything happening to the Pope right now had to do with that.

“First, a single blow.”

Gongson Chun Gi grinned. He then made a relaxed fist with his hand, and lightly punched towards Baek Mu Ryang. A very relaxed movement. The end result, however, wasn’t light at all.

Bang–!

A highly pressurized blast of air came at Baek Mu Ryang.

‘Shit!’

Baek Mu Ryang swung his sword towards the blast coming towards him. A white cloud of energy came from the sword, and formed a wall in front of Baek Mu Ryang. It was the strongest technique of the Alliance, the Absolute Dao Sword Technique. He used that. The blast and the white sword energy met each other head-on.

Kukukuakuang–!

There was a blast! An explosion as the earth torn apart. Something that flew away like a rag doll. Surprisingly, the one that was blasted away was Baek Mu Ryang.

“.....He’s unlucky.”

Gongson Chun Gi glanced at Baek Mu Ryang, who had thrown up blood and fainted, then looked back at the battlefield. Everyone was still fighting.

“Damn it.”

Seeing blood made his body go crazy. An immense, uncontrollable power. It was currently making his whole body crave blood. It felt like he was about to go crazy.

‘You think I’d lose?’

Pshh–

The bloody aura around Gongson Chun Gi began to get lighter. He was desperately keeping his power at bay. Otherwise, if he lost control here, things would get extremely bad.

‘I am Gongson Chun Gi.’

Gongson Chun Gi spoke his name in his mind, tightly formed a fist in his hand, and walked forward. One step at a time. He began

to walk upwards in midair.

“E, Empty Steps (虛空踏步)!”

Some of the martial artists down below shouted in surprise. Gongson Chun Gi walked over the countless martial artists using this technique, and arrived at the middle of the battlefield, in the sky. When he looked down, he was able to see numerous corpses.

Dokun–

Gongson Chun Gi grit his teeth and smiled. He could smell the fragrant blood from everywhere. When he felt that he was slowly being driven insane from this, he hurried himself.

“Baek Mu Ryang lost. He’s over there, laying on the ground like a corpse. If you don’t want to die, leave.”

He wanted to end this quietly, and peacefully, while he was still sane. But it seemed things just don’t go the way you want it to sometimes.

“Why should we listen to a demon like you?!”

“Yeah!”

Some idiots of the Alliance began to speak up. They weren’t backing down, even when afraid.

‘Idiots.....’

When Gongson Chun Gi frowned, he could hear someone whispering something from afar.

“Isn’t the Moon Edge Blade Technique over there? That must be why these people from the Demon Church are trying so hard to not let us pass.”

That was the final blow. After all, even mentioning “Moon Edge Blade Technique” held significant power. Everyone who were afraid of the Pope’s aura became active again.

“They really are idiots.”

He couldn’t do anything anymore. He had to use the most effective method, now. Fear. Gongson Chun Gi was about to plant the fear of the church into the hearts of the people here.

“I warned you, you dumbasses.”

He calmed his breath. He was really about to lose it because of all the blood. No, he was about to feel really good because of all the blood.

‘Damn it! I have to do this as fast as possible.’

There was no time. Gongson Chun Gi stopped breathing, and lifted his right hand up into the sky. Then, a round sphere was formed above the hand.

A sphere that resembled a drop of blood. While the martial artists down below were growing cautious, Gongson Chun Gi put down his hand. When he did so, a rain of blood began to fall to the ground.

‘Shura Environment, the third chapter.’

The Demon Blood Rain (瀑魔血雨). A red rain of destruction began to rain down to the ground. That was the last thing Cho Ryu Hyang saw.

Paa–!

“Eh.....?”

“Are you awake?”

“.....Yes.”

“That’s good. You didn’t wake up too late.”

What was that supposed to mean? Cho Ryu Hyang blinked a few times, and made a confused expression. Then, he began to feel a little hazy.

Come to think of it, his body was really hot right now. Cho Ryu Hyang breathed rapidly with a red face.

‘But what was that thing from before?’

What was it? A simple dream? But didn’t that just now seem too realistic to be false?

‘I’ll have to ask teacher Gongson Chun Gi later.’

Cho Ryu Hyang thought this, even when his brain was getting a little hazy from all the heat.

“Can you stand?”

“Yes.”

“Then I’m sorry to say this, but can you stand right now? I have something to show you.”

Cho Ryu Hyang thought that it was strange that he was hearing teacher’s voice from somewhere afar. When he managed to stand up, his body stiffened on the spot.

“T, teacher. This.....”

Jo Gi Chun. He was currently wrapped up in silver vines, and was hanging in midair with only his face exposed.

“What.....”

What happened? Why was teacher exhibiting a phenomenon that only happened to formations?

“We are inside a formation I made.”

Jo Gi Chun paused a bit, and spoke with his calm voice again.

“And I became the formation’s nucleus.”

The nucleus? Cho Ryu Hyang could understand everything then. At the same time, he became enraged.

“Why.....why did you do this?”

Normally, a formation’s nucleus was something that had an immense amount of power condensed inside, so it was the most sensitive, and the most dangerous part of the whole formation. That’s why most formations experts used a gem that could take in a lot of energy, and control the whole formation using it.

But how about using a human to replace the role of the gem? That was a dangerous concept to behold. Even a slight miscalculation would lead to the body exploding from all the

energy.

Something that must never be tried, even with multiple lives. Even if the person survived, there would be a big problem. The human body wouldn't be able to contain the power of the formation for long.

“It was inevitable.”

There was no time to make a formation using a gem. The situation was dire. Jo Gi Chun looked at his angry disciple with calmness, and opened his mouth.

“There's not much time left. This place is no longer safe.”

Cho Ryu Hyang could feel his head rapidly cool when he heard his teacher's words. Come to think of it, his teacher was someone that knew even more about formations than he.

But that teacher made a formation like this, even while knowing the consequences? Surely there must've been a reason for this. He shouldn't get angered like this just like that.

“What do you mean?”

“The enemies are coming. I'm not confident that I can resist.”

Cho Ryu Hyang turned pale. Enemies? Resisting? What was that

all about?

“They are almost here.”

Krrrrr–

The earth began to shift. At the same time, Jo Gi Chun’s face twisted from pain.

“Watch. This is the last thing I will teach you.”

Kraaam–!

With a giant explosion, the wall fell. And the people of the Alliance, each of them with demonic faces, attacked.

Chapter 39. The Teacher Buried In His Heart

‘These guys, did they figure something out?’

The Blood Sound Demon, Ju Sang San. He flinched when he saw the people from the Alliance run full speed towards the center. That was because the young lord, Cho Ryu Hyang, was located in that spot.

‘Even so.....’

Ju Sang San made a face of disgust. These people were running with their backs open, knowing full well that he was after their tails?

‘Disrespectful pricks. Do I really look that weak to you?’

Of course, Ju Sang San had no idea that the other side was staking their lives on this one bet. Ju Sang San moved with a face of annoyance.

Fast but quietly. He quickly approached his enemies. And when he arrived at their location, he began to put strength into his fingers.

Pachichichi–

An immense amount of energy condensed into Ju Sang San's fingertips as it emitted a dangerous sound.

‘Now.’

Pyut–

The energy condensed in his fingertips flew out like lightning, and went for the expert at the very back.

“Uncle!”

When Yu Sul Bin shouted out a warning, the expert at the back, Feng Sul Zi, noticed the danger behind him. At the same time, he spun his body like a top in order to dodge Ju Sang San's attack.

He only dodged because he had no confidence to block Ju Sang San's blow. But that was exactly what Ju Sang San was going for. A small pause. That would be enough.

‘First, one guy.’

Ju Sang San faintly smiled in the dark. The expert that fell behind the group just now would be a good target for him.

‘Would you still run with this guy in danger?’

When Ju Sang San exposed his body from the dark, Yu Sul Bin hesitated.

He was contemplating on whether he should save his uncle, or just run. When he did this, Feng Ho Zi quickly warned him with a stern voice.

“Don’t look back.”

“But.....”

Uncle wouldn’t be able to resist that demon alone. Ju Sang San was a harmonious expert. The only way to face that man would be for Yu Sul Bin to make his move.

“Bastard! Do you think you’re the only one prepared to die here? Don’t look at your uncles this lightly!”

Yu Sul Bin closed mouth when he got yelled at. Uncle was right. His uncles weren’t cowards. They weren’t cheaters, either.

Stopping here to go back would be an insult to his uncle’s determination.

Kang–!

When he glanced back, Yu Sul Bin could he Feng Sul Zi desperately trying to keep Ju Sang San occupied. Yu Sul Bin

burned the image of his uncle into his mind, then moved on.

‘Uncle will die.’

When he thought that, he felt unimaginable grief from his heart. He was prepared for this event, but when he actually faced the situation in real life, it was unbearably painful.

‘Damn it!’

The only way to make his uncle’s death not be in vain would be to run as fast as he could. That fact alone made Yu Sul Bin go berserk in rage.

“Uaaaaah!”

Yu Sul Bin took out his sword, and began to slash at all the tree roots coming at him.

Chuaa– Chii–!

As they kept moving forward, the amount of the tree roots increased significantly. But even that couldn’t block the raging Yu Sul Bin.

Even though he was carrying a patient on his back, Yu Sul Bin was relentlessly chopping down everything at a rapid pace.

‘I’ll destroy it.’

They were close. The tree roots were annoying, but they would soon arrive at their destination. And whatever there was inside, until Yu Sul Bin didn’t destroy everything there, he would not be calm.

Then.

Ping-!

He could hear something flying towards them again.

‘Already?’

Yu Sul Bin looked back with a pale face. Did his uncle buy them only this much time?

Yu Sul Bin’s face turned demonic when he looked back. That was because he could see Ju Sang San, drenched in blood, coming towards them at a frightening speed.

Then.

Bam-!

Someone behind Yu Sul Bin blocked Ju Sang San with a sword.

At the same time, Yu Sul Bin's face filled with pain.

“Uncle Feng Jin Zi!”

“Go!”

Uncle Feng Jin Zi, the one who always enjoyed reading books in a quiet spot. He covered their back, and stood firmly on the spot.

Yu Sul Bin looked at his uncle with a pained face, then bit his lips and applied strength to his limbs. he couldn't stop here.

He could see his uncles who were filled with determination running besides him. Yu Sul Bin, and the experts of the Alliance couldn't turn back now.

‘Damn it! Damn it!’

He thought everything would go smoothly. But didn't he lose two of his uncles just now? If he counted the injured, too, a total of three people were lost already.

“Uncle, where is it?”

When Yu Sul Bin asked this with a tone filled with malice, Feng Ho Zi squinted his eyes, and pointed somewhere.

“It’s there.”

“Will the formation break if I destroy that?”

“Probably.”

“Alright.”

Voom–

The moment Yu Sul Bin heard his uncle’s answer, he put an astronomical amount of strength into his sword. After shaking unsteadily for a while, a white cloud of energy began to seep out of the sword.

“Haa!”

With a shout, Yu Sul Bin leapt to the sky, and threw his sword.

Shuaaaa–!

A white lightning descended upon the center of the silver tree with a sharp noise.

‘Break.’

Yu Sul Bin was confident. After all, he was using the Energy

Control Technique. It was a mere imitation of the actual technique, as Yu Sul Bin wasn't proficient at it, yet, but it would suffice.

Koom- Kakakam-!

With a sound that shook the heavens and the earth, the silver tree that got hit by the white lightning split in half.

To be truthful, making a formation right here on the spot wasn't hard for Jo Gi Chun.

The original formation broke because of the immense amount of energy generated from the dragon, but wasn't this originally a place where there were two formations drawn in a single spot?

Jo Gi Chun simply restored the formation from its broken state. But of course, he wasn't able to restore the formation to its former glory.

Even Jo Gi Chun, the master of maths and formations, wasn't able to execute the equations that the imugi used in order to create the formations perfectly.

The formation he made hurriedly was the outer formation of protection made outside. He restored that first, and decided to use the inner formation for a different purpose.

Kukuakuang–!

“Watch carefully. This is the last thing I will be teaching you.”

That was the last thing he said. After that, the experts of the Alliance broke through the broken tree.

“I found you, you godforsaken rats.”

Shuaa–!

There was no warning. There were no questions. The man at the front simply stabbed out front. Jo Gi Chun couldn't dodge the man's move. Truthfully, Jo Gi Chun had no intention to dodge, either. He just calmly accepted his end.

Stab–

He could feel the cold metal digging through his flesh. Even though he was wearing silver vines like armor, even that couldn't block Yu Sul Bin's sword.

Jo Gi Chun threw up blood, and smiled. With this, the formation was complete.

Jo Gi Chun didn't have the power to be able to activate two formations on top of each other at the same time, but he could

activate the formations in order.

Chuaaa–!

Blood spattered everywhere, and Jo Gi Chun's body fell to the ground with a spasm. The activation requirement of the second formation. With the destruction of the formation's core, the requirement was met.

“Is it over?”

Yu Sul Bin wondered out loud.

The squirming man on the ground. He could see that this man was the core of the formation as soon as he saw the man. That was because Yu Sul Bin could sense a high concentration of energy gathered inside the old man.

When Yu Sul Bin saw the old man with his heightened senses, he could immediately feel the high energy signature, and stabbed.

But strangely, the energy inside the old man didn't disperse immediately.

“T, teacher.....”

“Hm?”

Come to think of it, there was that kid who was just standing there like a statue from a while back. The child who just stood there, covered in his teacher's blood.

“What? Is this old man your teacher?”

Yu Sul Bin smirked as he cleaned the blood off his sword. The child's whole body was trembling as he crawled towards the dead teacher's body, and began to shake it.

But there was no way a dead person would be moving. When the old man didn't respond at all from the child's actions, the child began to moan like a crying animal.

“Ah, ou. Auu.....”

It looked like the child was trying to talk, but the words weren't forming in the child's mouth.

“Che, what's this? Showing a little bit of humanity, even though you're from the Demon Church? Damn it, this is annoying me.”

They were ridiculous people, the Demon Church. Yu Sul Bin took up the sword he was cleaning just a moment ago, and opened his mouth.

“Anyways, it looks like you're related to the Demon Church somehow, so I can't let you live.”

It didn't feel right to kill such a young child like this, but he had to do it. He couldn't leave any possible threats alive.

Pyut–

The sword dropped down, and a single line approached Cho Ryu Hyang vertically. But.....

“Youuu!”

Kram–!

Yu Sul Bin's eyebrows twitched. A small shadow had just blocked his blade.

“What? Didn't you run away?”

Yu Sul Bin grinned when he saw Ju Sang San. He thought he lost the demon for sure. That's why he had given up on acquiring the Moon Edge Blade Technique altogether, but what was this?

You..... Do you even know who you tried to attack just now?“”

Ju Sang San trembled in rage as he glared at Yu Sul Bin. He almost lost the precious heir to the church just now, didn't he? Yu Sul Bin's eyes shined when he noticed the fierce aura generated by Ju Sang San.

“Hoh? What’s this? Is this kid really that important?”

“.....”

Ju Sang San didn’t respond. Instead, he put his hands together, and got in a certain position. He gave up on running a long time ago. He wasn’t about to leave the heir here and run. He was going to stake his life here to fight.

But the problem was, he wasn’t certain that he would be able to save the young lord, even if he threw away his life.

‘Even so, this old man’s not about to let you die earlier than me.’

He wasn’t about to see that happen, even if he got blinded in the process. As Ju Sang San prepared himself for death, however, something happened.

Dudududuk–!

The formation was beginning to shake violently. Feng Ho Zi, who had been observing at the whole situation carefully, turned stiff.

“Move back, Sul Bin.”

“What?”

“This is suspicious.”

“What do you mean?”

“.....It’s a formation.”

“Again?”

What was that all about? Don’t formations end when the core gets destroyed? He destroyed the core just now, so why was there something else happening? This was getting annoying.

“Even though he’s an enemy, he’s truly someone to be respected. To think the man created a formation expecting something like this to happen.”

Feng Ho Zi could barely see it. The final creation of the dead man lying over there. When he sighed in amazement, the ground split like a turtle’s shell, and red magma began to spout from the cracks.

The Rage of the Fire Dragon. That was the final formation Jo Gi Chun created in his final moments.

Krrr–!

“Hee!”

When Yu Sul Bin leapt away from the red magma seeping out of the ground, the child who had been hugging the old man's body looked up. At that moment, the two looked at each other straight in the eye.

“You impudent brat.....”

The child was looking at him with a eyes that would appear only in nightmares. The emotion portrayed onto that face was all too clear.

‘Resentment (怨恨).’



Cho Ryu Hyang was glaring at Yu Sul Bin from inside the formation. His teacher died throwing up blood in front of him. Thanks to that bastard's sword. What was he doing all that time?

Cho Ryu Hyang opened his eyes as much as he could, and looked at Yu Sul Bin's face. His face, movement, expression, and speech.

Cho Ryu Hyang burned all that in his mind like a tattoo. He would never be able to forget about this man now. Not even in his dreams.....

“Young lord.....”

Ju Sang San thought that the death of Jo Gi Chun was inevitable. There really was no way to save the man in time. And at the same time, he was infinitely grateful for what Jo Gi Chun had done.

The man died in the stead of Cho Ryu Hyang. Thanks to Jo Gi Chun, Ju Sang San was able to save the young lord in time.

What would've happened if Yu Sul Bin used his sword at the young lord first? What would've happened if the one on the ground right now wasn't Jo Gi Chun, but was Cho Ryu Hyang, instead?

Ju Sang San probably would've gone insane.

“.....Follow me.”

Cho Ryu Hyang took his eyes off Yu Sul Bin, and used the Faultless view of the world.

There was no time to be sad, nor be angry anymore.

That would make him go against his teacher's wishes.

But even when walking, he couldn't really accept the fact that his teacher just died. He felt like he was going to go mad. He could hear the sound of his heartbeats ringing in his ears.

Cho Ryu hyang desperately tried to think of other things as he moved through the formation.

But it was all useless.

There was probably no one who would be able to maintain his sanity when covered in his teacher's blood, in front of the teacher's corpse. But Cho Ryu Hyang barely managed to not let go of his sanity.

'This formation won't last long.'

Cho Ryu Hyang grit his teeth. They had to get away from the formation as fast as possible, before the formation used up all its power. The one thing that pained him the most was the reality of not being able to recover even his teacher's corpse.

There really was no time.

If they hesitated here, trying to recover teacher's body and get killed by the people from the Alliance, they really would've made teacher die a dog's death.

They had to avoid that at all costs.

‘I will..... I will definitely come back.’

Cho Ryu Hyang knew why his teacher made a formation like this. His teacher wanted to spare the life of this foolish disciple. Jo Gi Chun wanted to save his disciple so much, that he sacrificed his life for Cho Ryu Hyang.

And when he thought that, Cho Ryu Hyang’s body began to tremble uncontrollably again. At the same time, his vision blurred. Cho Ryu Hyang quietly cried while wiping his eyes with his sleeve. He wanted to cry and shout from grief on the spot, but there simply was no time.

‘I still had a lot of questions to ask him.....’

It hurt. But he didn’t know where exactly it hurt. Cho Ryu Hyang. On the day he lost his first teacher, he realized what unforgettable pain and resentment felt like.

Chapter 40. The Burning Hatred

The first Alliance-Demon War.

The result of this battle was really something like a nightmare for the Alliance.

Baek Mu Ryang, the leader of the Alliance, and the member of the three sovereigns, lost to Gongson Chun Gi.

And in addition, the Sword King stepped down from his position as the leader. Thanks to that, the Alliance lost quite a lot from this war.

Many experts died, and the central figure stepped down. Morale was also at its lowest. And unlike the Alliance, the Heavenly Demon Church earned much from the battle.

The Lion Sword King, Yu Sul Bin, looked at his senior brother, the past leader of the Alliance, with a dark face.

“.....I failed to retrieve the Moon Edge Blade Technique. Please punish me, senior brother.”

Baek Mu Ryang. He looked upon his junior with a exhausted face, and sighed.

“This isn’t your fault. It was all caused by my lack of skill. There’s no need for you to get so worried like this.”

Yu Sul Bin shook his head.

“No, senior brother. It was all because I rushed things..... All of the uncles died in this mission. It’s my fault, senior brother.”

Yu Sul Bin began to cry as he talked. To him, his uncles were like his precious grandfathers. People that were that dear to him died in front of his eyes.

They died in the hands of the Blood Sound Demon, Ju Sang San..... Yu Sul Bin couldn’t do anything despite of being only an arm’s length away from his dying uncles.

This event truly made him realize how weak he really was. He lacked experience. He had realized that the hard way.

“It was sad that Feng Sul Zi and Feng Jin Zi had to go. But their deaths weren’t for naught.”

Baek Mu Ryang pat his junior’s back, and spoke a few words.

“You managed to survive. That alone is enough.”

“No, it’s not. I need to be punished for my misdeeds. Otherwise I wouldn’t be able to live anymore.”

Yu Sul Bin sat on his knees in front of Baek Mu Ryang. He bowed down, and spoke.

“Please give me a punishment, senior brother.”

“Huh.....”

Baek Mu Ryang let out a regretful sigh as he looked at his junior brother. Yu Sul Bin was a relaxed, easygoing person.

But at the same time, the man was extremely efficient and responsible in his missions. Likewise, the man usually felt that he himself would be responsible for everything.

‘This is tiring.’

Baek Mu Ryang massaged his shoulders, and smiled inside. Baek Mu Ryang was feeling very unstable right now.

He experienced the might of the Pope, and when he was utterly destroyed by the man, he felt desperate.

This kind of feeling was not something he had ever felt before in his life.

‘Just one blow, was it?’

It didn't even look like the Pope gave it his all. A light punch. Baek Mu Ryang wasn't even able to take that. It was saddening.

His sky-high pride was shattered in an instant, and it even made him feel like it was a shame to not have died there on the battlefield.

Following the defeat of Baek Mu Ryang, the Alliance had to suffer from the Pope's wrath. A massacre. Because of a single man, the pope, the whole situation flipped 180 degrees.

If the monk from the Shaolin temple, the Godly Monk Kongye, didn't intervene, the casualties would've been even higher.

'Didn't the great monk lose an arm while trying to block the Pope's attack.....'

The price for blocking the Pope's attack was too high. Kongye was one of the strongest martial artists even among the fifteen guests, and yet.....

Even he wasn't able to block the oncoming attack, and lost an arm. Truly, the Pope's power was frightening.

'Didn't the Pope enter a Godly Realm already?'

The realm above the Harmonious stage. The towering wall that

even the strongest experts didn't dare to climb. The realm that one would reach after climbing that wall would be the Godly Realm.

Perhaps the Pope already reached that state, Baek Mu Ryang thought.

“Punish me, senior brother.”

Baek Mu Ryang was snapped awake from the words of Yu Sul Bin. He immediately sighed in his mind once more. Taking responsibility for all this trouble and stepping down was something that Baek Mu Ryang should've naturally done.

Something that immense happened mere days ago. Did Baek Mu Ryang have to give out the punishment and stir up the Alliance once again, especially when it was beginning to calm down? It seemed unnecessary.

That was why Baek Mu Ryang felt bothered when Yu Sul Bin simply came and started to ask for a punishment. Right now, Baek Mu Ryang needed peace and quiet, but everyone around him simply wouldn't let him go.

‘It is tiring.’

Baek Mu Ryang looked up at the sky with a tired face. He didn't want to do anything right now. He just wanted to rest.

The Heavenly Demon Church, Gansu Branch. In the Resting Pagoda, there was a casket. In the casket lay Jo Gi Chun, and in front of it stood Gongson Chun Gi and Cho Ryu Hyang.

“I heard what happened.”

A stuffy voice. Gongson Chun Gi thought for a long time, and looked at his disciple.

“It must’ve been hard for you.”

Cho Ryu Hyang couldn’t say anything. He simply looked at his dead teacher with pale, lifeless eyes.



His eyes were all puffy from crying, and his face held no life. Gongson Chun Gi, looking at that, pulled out a small gourd from his sleeve and opened his mouth.

“This guy, did he enjoy drinking?”

“.....I don’t really know.”

A dry, raspy voice flowed out of Cho Ryu Hyang’s mouth. His tired self somehow managed to open his mouth.

“Is that right?”

Gongson Chun Gi sat down on the edge of the casket, and opened his mouth.

“You know, it doesn’t really look like this boring fellow drank much, especially when you take a look at his personality. What do you think?”

Cho Ryu Hyang thought for a bit, then nodded.

“Probably.”

Cho Ryu Hyang never saw his teacher drink. It didn’t really look like his teacher liked to drink, either.

“Then I’ll have to drink this in his stead. I brought a good one on purpose, but to think it would be wasted like this.”

Gongson Chun Gi drank a few sips directly from the gourd, then suddenly asked Cho Ryu Hyang a question.

“By the way, do you know anything about this fellow’s family?”

“.....”

Cho Ryu Hyang couldn't respond. That was because he didn't know about it.

'I didn't know much about teacher.'

Indeed. When he thought about it, he didn't know a single thing about Jo Gi Chun.

In the past, they always talked about math and formations, pretending that they knew everything about each other already. Pretending that they understood each other perfectly. That's how they functioned.

But when Cho Ryu Hyang actually tried to think about his teacher, he came up with nothing. Did his teacher like drinking? Who was his teacher's family? He didn't know the most basic thing about teacher.

He felt desperate. When Gongson Chun Gi realized that his disciple's face was getting darker, he opened his mouth.

"I'm going to give the corpse to his family. What do you think?"

".....I think that would be for the best."

Cho Ryu Hyang didn't feel that he had the right to hold onto the corpse. He was even shameful that he was here in the first place, when he knew next to nothing about his teacher.

He felt ashamed. Gongson Chun Gi, looking at that, opened his mouth.

“That’s how it is. It was the same for me, too.”

“.....”

“You think you know a lot about someone, but once you think about it, you know next to nothing about him. That’s what a human relationship is. It looks like he gave you a good lesson, even after death.”

“.....”

Cho Ryu Hyang’s chest felt stuffy again. That was because he just remembered something his teacher said before death.

[You.... have..... to live.]

His teacher was worried about him, even when dying. Cho Ryu Hyang, when he thought about that, couldn’t even lift his head.

“But do you really know nothing about your teacher? Think carefully.”

Cho Ryu Hyang began to think when Gongson Chun Gi said this. Right. It wasn’t like he really knew nothing about his teacher. He

knew what his teacher liked, and what his teacher's personality was like.

And his teacher was the only one that could talk using mathematics. The information about his teacher that others didn't know about. He knew about those.

“So don't be so sad. This really isn't your fault, either.”

Gongson Chun Gi put his hand on the sniffling boy's head, and smiled.

“Come to think of it, you're really cocky, aren't you? Trying to take all the burden on yourself, just how arrogant are you?”

Cho Ryu Hyang fiddled with his glasses, and made a complicated face. He didn't know how he should respond.

“Disciple.”

“Yes, teacher.”

“You're still young. Am I right?”

“Yes.....”

Yes. He was young and powerless. He couldn't do anything when

Jo Gi Chun died.

“It’s alright to ask for help from adults. After all, aren’t there a lot of good adults like me around?”

It was a really arrogant statement. But it somehow displayed how much Gongson Chun Gi cared for his disciple. Cho Ryu Hyang, who realized that, tried to smile for Gongson Chun Gi’s sake. When Gongson Chun Gi saw that, however, he simply grinned and said something.

“Your face is really funny. Like, really really funny. Should I bring a mirror for you to see?”

“.....It’s ok.”

When Cho Ryu Hyang’s face relaxed a bit thanks to his teacher’s joke, Gongson Chun Gi spoke.

“You know, this friend here. He was probably satisfied. After all, he managed to save you. That was probably the only thing he would’ve wanted at that moment.”

“.....”

“But you wouldn’t be satisfied with that. Am I right?”

Cho Ryu Hyang nodded. And his eyes began to reflect eyes of

rage, unlike before.

He couldn't be satisfied with surviving. He managed to live by getting drenched in his teacher's blood. There was no way he would end it at that.

“.....I need to be repaid for what was done to teacher.”

Revenge. The Alliance. He had to receive the payment from Yu Sul Bin for killing his teacher. That was the only thing Cho Ryu Hyang could do while he was alive.

If there at least wasn't a motive like this, he would've gone crazy a long time ago. Gongson Chun Gi, after observing the bloodthirst contained within the boy's eyes, scratched the back of his head and spoke.

“You know, I don't believe in buddha or anything, but like these monks in the temples, I don't like the word revenge. It feels like blood.”

“.....”

The people Gongson Chun Gi killed in the battle was said to be a thousand.

That was why Cho Ryu Hyang really couldn't say anything when Gongson Chun Gi said that with such a straight face after killing so many people.

“But..... I know for a fact that there lives an unbeatable monster known as ‘obligations and resentment (恩怨)’ in the martial world. You know, that thing’s so big, that even I can’t do anything about it.”

Gongson Chun Gi paused a bit, then looked at Cho Ryu Hyang and opened his mouth.

“I hope that you don’t get devoured by that monster.”

“.....”

Cho Ryu Hyang couldn’t say yes straightaway. That was because the only thing he wanted to do at the moment was to take revenge for his teacher.

Cho Ryu Hyang just looked at Gongson Chun Gi without a word. Gongson Chun Gi stared back with a complicated expression.

“Damn it, if you feel that way, I’ll help you. After all, I don’t really like the guys at the Alliance either, anyways.”

“Thank you, teacher.”

Gongson Chun Gi wasn’t comfortable seeing that the only thing that drove his disciple to learn martial arts was revenge, but he completely understood what Cho Ryu Hyang was feeling right

now.

Gongson Chun Gi, believing that time would wash away the feelings of revenge, opened his mouth.

“Don’t be too thankful. The training you’ll get from me will be hellish.”

“I’m prepared.”

There was nothing one could get for free in this world. Becoming the heir to the church was sheer luck, but it wasn’t like he could just learn the martial arts of the church for free because of that.

Martial arts demands one thing in return of learning it. Dedication.

“Martial arts should be hard, just like how living and dying is a hard thing. It’s obvious that one would have to approach death closer if he/she wants to be strong. Am I right?”

“Yes.”

When Cho Ryu Hyang responded with a resolute voice, Gongson Chun Gi leaned back a little in his sitting position, and spoke.

“In order to take revenge for this guy, in order to survive in this world, you’ll need martial arts. A strong one at that.”

“Yes.”

The purpose of him learning martial arts was definite. When Cho Ryu Hyang set his mind in stone like this, Gongson Chun Gi fell into a deep predicament.

‘Should I just teach him the Shura Environment.....’

The experts at the Alliance weren’t weak. The only martial arts that could surpass them was the Shura Environment. Normally, he would just pass on the martial art without even thinking about it.

But right now, Gongson Chun Gi was greatly concerned about it. There was no doubt that Shura Environment was strong. It was probably the strongest in the world.

But doesn’t this martial art have a terrifying side effect not many know about?

‘Can this boy overcome it?’

The effect of turning insane when seeing blood. Berserking Blood Effect (狂血症). Even Gongson Chun Gi, who overcame many, many walls after years of training, still was unable to surpass this side effect.

After using a certain amount of strength, the blood in the body

goes crazy. Then, the sanity in the user's mind slowly disappears, and in the end, it turns the user into a blood-craving monster.

Should he really teach such a thing to his disciple? A one that craves revenge, at that? Gongson Chun Gi thought and thought again.

‘Is there anything I can use?’

Teaching the Shura Environment would be detrimental for the boy's development. After thinking for a long time, Gongson Chun Gi put on a bright face, and looked at Cho Ryu Hyang.

“Come to think of it, I heard you still have the Moon Edge Blade Technique. Do you?”

“Yes.”

“Let me see.”

Cho Ryu Hyang pulled out the book from his clothes, then flinched. There was a bloodstain on the cover of the book. Wasn't this Jo Gi Chun's blood?

His heart, which somehow calmed just moments ago, started to pound vigorously again. When Cho Ryu Hyang's eyes began to turn red from rage, Gongson Chun Gi spoke.

“I hope this thing lives up to the rumors surrounding it.”

Is this really something that was as good as the Shura Environment? Gongson Chun Gi put his hopes into the book, and opened its covers.

He then began to slowly read it. The strongest martial artist in the world.

He was judging the power of the book. And that actually took more time than expected.

Chapter 41. The Distant Vengeance

Many people from the Alliance died in the war, but there was a clan in the Alliance that did not lose anyone.

That clan was the Nangong clan, the ones who were watching the battle from afar. They were able to retreat without losing a single man in the war.

“You were here, too?”

“Yes.”

“You did a foolish thing.”

“Didn’t you already know that I was going to come?”

Nangong Yubin. He was staring directly at the middle aged man in front of him.

The middle aged man was Yubin’s father, the leader of the Nangong clan. His name was Nangong Shiyu (南宮勢玉). That man looked at his third child, and smirked.

“You’re quite perceptive. Anyway, you managed to come just in time. That’s good.”

“.....I was able to come quickly thanks to a friend.”

Nangong Yubin replied with a depressed expression as he thought of Peng Ga Ho. Unlike the Nangong clan, the Hebei Peng Clan, who showed an unusual amount of obsession in this affair, suffered from heavy damages.

He was worried about Peng Ga Ho.

“You were lucky. So, did you manage to get a glimpse of the Demon Church with your own eyes?”

Nangong Yubin hesitated a bit. Then, he spoke with a serious voice.

“They were overwhelming.”

Indeed. The Demon Church was truly overwhelming.

“The Pope?”

Nangong Yubin shook his head.

“Even if the Pope hadn’t intervened, the Demon Church would’ve prevailed.”

“Correct.”

Nangong Shiyu poured some tea into the cup in front of him. He had three sons, and two daughters. Thankfully, all of the children were blessed with quite a lot of talent.

But there was a single person that stood out even amongst children like this. That would be his youngest child, Nangong Yubin.

Nangong Shiyu, who recognized the boy's talent from a long time ago, treated his youngest child dearly. He knew that this boy was the one that would lead their clan into the next generation.

“From the start, I never had the intention to fight the Heavenly Demon Church.”

“.....”

“Is it surprising?”

“.....yes.”

This truly came as a surprise. Didn't Yubin's father harbor immense hatred for the church? A man like that didn't even want to fight? It really was something unexpected.

“I didn't like the way everything was going from the time when the Dao Emperor called on the clans. The church isn't something to be taken on without much preparation.”

Nangong Yubin didn't say anything. There was no way that that was the only reason his father was unwilling to fight. His prediction was indeed correct.

“It was suspicious. Was what the leader was going for truly the Heavenly Demon Church? I was skeptical of that idea. So I did some research.”

Nangong Yubin gulped. He felt uncomfortable all of the sudden.

“Did you..... find something?”

“Yes. Something very disgusting.”

Nangong Shiyu told his son about what the Dao Emperor did in order to get the clans motivated enough to fight.

“Baek Mu Ryang was going for the Moon Edge Blade Technique from the start. The war was simply a good cover-up story he could use.”

“.....”

Nangong Yubin's face turned dark. Many people died due to this war. Those deaths were caused simply because of a single man's greed? Wasn't that too sad?

“Well, the leader got slapped in the face by his own plan, though. To think the Pope would’ve come. Even the leader wouldn’t have anticipated that.”

Nangong Shiyu. He still didn’t know the Dao Emperor took the Pope into account in the plan. He looked into his child’s face, and asked a question with an excited face.

“Did you see their battle?”

“Yes.”

“How was it? Tell me what you felt.”

“.....Is it ok if I tell you my real feelings?”

“Of course.”

Nangong Yubin bitterly smiled before replying. His father had a lot of hopes for him. Because of that, he never betrayed his father’s expectations since the time when he was a young child.

But that was about to change now.

“I’m glad that I wasn’t born in their generation.”

Nangong Shiyu paused when he heard his son’s words. He looked

at his son with mysterious eyes, and opened his mouth.

“Are you lying?”

“No, I’m not.”

“You became honest.”

Nangong Yubin scratched his cheeks, and spoke.

“I suffered a bit when coming here. Sorry.”

“No, it is a good change.”

Nangong Shiyu made a satisfied face. His son definitely grew up. It was definitely worth it to make his son come all the way here, the hard way.

In truth, there was someone watching over the children as they traveled, even if they might’ve not realized it. Nangong Shiyu dispatched someone just in case something bad would happen.

‘But the Hebei Peng clan didn’t do such a thing.’

The Nangong clan thought that this was a little suspicious. They thought the Peng clan would’ve dispatched someone for sure, but there was nothing of the sort.

“He’s a dispensable child, isn’t he.....”

“What?”

“Ah, it’s nothing.”

Nangong Shiyu let his thoughts unintentionally slip. He made a troubled face for a moment, then quickly tried to change the subject.

“What’s your relationship with Peng Ga Ho?”

Nangong Yubin thought of Peng Ga Ho for a moment, then spoke with a serious tone.

“We became friends.”

“Friends.....”

The children of the five great clans. The interaction between the children of the clans were restricted to a certain extent. Thankfully, it seemed that having Peng Ga Ho as a friend did not cross the restriction in the eyes of the clan.

“Come to think of it, it seemed that the Hebei Peng clan suffered from heavy damages in the battle. Did you visit them yet?”

Nangong Yubin shook his head.

“Not..... yet.”

“You should go check on them now. If you are his friend, you should share his pain with him. If you only shared his happy moments with him, would you even be a true friend?”

“Alright.”

Nangong Yubin nodded, and stood up. He was off to meet Peng Ga Ho.

“You came?”

“.....”

Nangong Yubin flinched when he saw Peng Ga Ho. The boy was beaten black and blue.

“What are you doing? Come in.”

Nangong Yubin was snapped awake from Peng Ga Ho’s words, and followed Peng Ga Ho inside.

“My face is weird, right?”

“.....I almost didn't recognize you.”

Peng Ga Ho smirked when Nangong Yubin said this.

“This big brother, too, gets surprised when looking at the mirror. To think that this handsome face of mine would swell up like a meatbun, I can't believe it.”

Nangong Yubin asked Peng Ga Ho a question with a smile on his face.

“So, how did you.....”

“Ah, I got beat up by dad. Typical stuff. Nothing unusual.”

He heard that the personality of the Peng clan's chief was quite violent, but to think that it was to this extent. Peng Ga Ho smiled when Nangong Yubin looked at him with sympathy.



“What is it? Does this big brother look pitiful?”

“A little. You look quite hurt.”

Peng Ga Ho grinned, and shook his head.

“This big brother is a blessed child. And these are injuries of honor.”

“.....?”

An unexpected response. When Nangong Yubin put on a confused expression, Peng Ga Ho began to explain what he meant as he brought his teacup to his mouth.

“My dad was able to survive and beat me up like this. It’s a sign of him being healthy. My uncles and cousins wouldn’t be able to suffer the same fate as me even if they wanted to, though. After all, most of them passed on in the battle.”

“.....Right.”

Peng Ga Ho was an unexpectedly optimistic person. Nangong Yubin thought that, and then tried to remember just how much damage the Hebei Peng clan took.

The Hebei Peng clan. About three hundred experts came from that clan in order to take the Moon Edge Blade Technique, and about one hundred died in the hands of the Demon Church.

As they took such a massive hit in the battle, they had to retreat to the Gansu Branch of the Alliance with corpses of their family, and hold a funeral.

Actually, even retrieving corpses was a hard task. That was because most of the corpses there were either amputated, or was disfigured to the point of no recognition.

“Being alive is a good thing. Even if an arm or a leg falls off, it’s all good as long as you’re alive. Just surviving that demon-like Pope’s attack is an achievement in itself. That is all that is making me not feel hurt right now.”

Nangong Yubin nodded when Peng Ga Ho said this with a grin.

The Heavenly Demon Church. They were truly frightening. Especially their leader. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to call the Pope a demon.

The countless drops of concentrated energy that fell from the skies with a single sweep of the hands. Just what kind of a martial technique was that?

Each time the Pope swept his hands over the battlefield, countless people died.

And.....

‘He was smiling, I believe.’

Right. The Pope was smiling. The Pope was killing many people with a joyous smile on his face.

A one-way slaughter. The Pope right then looked truly terrifying. It was as if the Pope was a manifestation of fear itself. Peng Ga Ho spoke while Nangong Yubin was reliving the terrifying battle.

“If the Godly Monk hadn't intervened right then, we would've all died.”

“Yeah.”

The Godly Monk, Kongye. He used the Lion's Roar (獅子吼) in order to wake everyone from a trance of fear, and managed to get the attention of the Pope while everyone escaped. Thanks to him, many people were able to get out alive.

That man was his savior. Peng Ga Ho, who had been thinking the same thing as Nangong Yubin, finished his tea, sighed, and spoke.

“You know, the Pope completely erased the notion of revenge or hatred out of our minds.”

The Demon King, Gongson Chun Gi. That man showed true fear to everyone on the field. Even Peng Ga Ho, the boy who was usually all confident and prideful, was suppressed in an instant.

“In reality, I'm really angry right now.”

Not even being able to consider taking revenge. Peng Ga Ho had to sigh because he knew his limits.

The two stopped talking for a while. They had to think of something on their own. Right then, Peng Ga Ho spoke after fidgeting a bit.

“Thanks for stopping this big brother before. I managed to live thanks to you.”

Nangong Yubin smiled bitterly. They had been observing the battle from afar, hidden from everyone else. They were afraid that

their family members might recognize them if they got too close to the battle.

When the dragon ascended, the Hebei Peng clan were the first to move. Thanks to that, they were the ones to clash with the experts from the Heavenly Demon Church first.

When blood spattered, and the field turned chaotic, Peng Ga Ho became enraged and tried to jump into the battle.

Nangong Yubin was the one that prevented him from doing that. The boy had pressed Peng Ga Ho's veins, and made him completely immobile.

When he thought about it now, Nangong Yubin's decision was a wise one. They didn't have the strength to survive in the chaotic mess of the battlefield, nor did they have the ability to dodge the Pope's attacks.

He almost managed to die a dog's death. Nangong Yubin stared at Peng Ga Ho, and smiled with an exhausted face.

“Well, like you said, it's all good as long as we live.”

“I don't know about that. Is that really alright?”

“.....”

A cold, determined voice. Nangong Yubin closed his mouth when Peng Ga Ho said this. Satisfied with just living? There was no way that was going to happen.

If he got satisfied with staying alive, the people who died in the war would've truly died a dog's death. Peng Ga Ho rubbed his swollen lips, and opened his mouth.

“This big brother is going to learn some martial techniques back at the clan. What about you?”

“I'll do the same.”

He had to get strong. The things they went through in this event were enough to set a fire inside their hearts.

“This big brother will learn all the techniques there is, so that I can take revenge on that demon.”

“.....”

Nangong Yubin tried to say something, but gave up. He knew that what Peng Ga Ho was trying to do was unspeakably hard.

But there was no choice. There was no choice to not follow this path. That was the responsibility of those in the five great clans.

That was the responsibility of the heirs. Then, Nangong Yubin

turned his head sideways and muttered something in a small voice.

“.....Come to think of it, it would be better for you to just wait for the Pope to die of old age rather than to take revenge with your own power.....”

“.....”

Peng Ga Ho flinched when he heard this.

‘This guy can freaking read my mind.’

Peng Ga Ho quickly tried to control his facial expression as he swore in his mind. He actually was considering that a little. The Pope simply was that strong.

Peng Ga Ho thought of the Pope, and made a depressed face. Revenge seemed so far and distant.

Chapter 42. The Legendary Moon Edge Blade Technique

The Heavenly Demon Church began to make preparations to leave the moment the war ended.

They had already retrieved the Moon Edge Blade Technique, completely decimated the army of the Alliance, and proved to everyone who the strongest in the continent was.

They no longer had any reason to stay here. Gongson Chun Gi sent everyone except his private guards back to the Ten Thousand Great Mountains.

And when he looked at the old man who came to visit him all the way from the Ten Thousand Great Mountains, he smiled.

“What’s the medicine gramps doing all the way over here?”

“Obviously I came because I got worried about Your Holiness.”

Sunwu Jo Duk. He was an old man who had a mysterious, powerful aura about him. When he saw the Pope, he immediately set to take a look at the various parts of the Pope’s body. After a while, the old man sighed in relief.

“You somehow managed to endure in that state. That’s amazing.”

“Well, you know my endurance is amazing. After all, I stayed healthy even after getting beat up to death by my teacher.”

“That’s obvious. Can you show me your arm?”

Gongson Chun Gi stretched out his right arm. The Demon Doctor, Sunwu Jo Duk. That old man was the only one out of the eight guardians who sided with Gongson Chun Gi for peace.

The others kept pestering Gongson Chun Gi about expanding into the mainland, but Sunwu Jo Duk was unexpectedly a person who enjoyed a peaceful, quiet life.

And he also happened to be the person to know Gongson Chun Gi’s secret.

“This is a relief. The Greater Magic Recorder (記呪大法) hasn’t broken completely. It’s about to crumble, though.”

“It might be because I forced the thing back in.”

The black bracelet around Gongson Chun Gi’s wrist. It was a seal that controlled the overflowing power of Gongson Chun Gi.

Since Gongson Chun Gi forcefully deactivated it to destroy Baek Mu Ryang, it wouldn’t be strange if it broke now.

“Of course it would be like this if you put it back forcefully. Thankfully, I brought a spare one here. If I didn’t happen to have it, it would’ve been terrible.”

“It was good that I barely remembered how to put this thing back on.....”

“I’ll show you how to do it again, so don’t forget this time.”

“Right.”

Sunwu Jo Duk brought out the same type of bracelet in Gongson Chun Gi’s wrist from his sleeves, and put it on the Pope’s wrist. After that, he began to whisper some words.

Voom–

With a small vibration, Gongson Chun Gi felt pain akin to having his muscles compressed in one place. He frowned. No matter how many times he experienced this, he never managed to get used to it. This disgusting feeling of having his muscles being forcefully restricted.

“I’m indebted to you again.”

“You’ve been telling me that since you were a child. I feel thankful.”

“Well, you’re right.”

Gongson Chun Gi smirked. All the previous Popes of the Heavenly Demon Church suffered from the same condition as he.

The Berserking Blood Effect. It was a side effect of the technique known as the “Shura Environment”, and the stronger the user of this technique got, the stronger the side effect got. Of course, Gongson Chun Gi, the one known as the strongest Pope in the history of the church, suffered from strong side effects.

The side effects were so strong, that unless he used a seal on himself, even he couldn’t suppress it fully.

“It’s good that you’re overflowing with energy, but if you don’t suppress it, you’ll go mad. We wouldn’t be able to stop you if that happens.”

“I know.”

Gongson Chun Gi, the strongest man in the world. If he were to go crazy, the world would turn into hell. After all, there would be no one that could stop him.

“By the way, where is he?”

“Who?”

“You said you chose a heir. You show show him to me, too.”

“Ugh, that’s the only thing that you old men care about.”

Gongson Chun Gi complained while massaging his strengthless right arm.

“It’s good that I got the chance to see the heir before I die. I thought I’d die without ever seeing him.”

“Well, it’d be no surprise if you died any time now.”

Sunwu Jo Duk looked at the complaining Pope before him, and smiled. Sunwu Jo Duk served the Pope ever since the Pope was a child. Therefore, he was able to see the immense amount of talent that Gongson Chun Gi possessed for a long time.

But no matter how long he stayed with the Pope, he never managed to see a heir be chosen. There simply wasn’t anyone talented enough to inherit Gongson Chun Gi’s power. He thought that the Pope’s powerful technique would get lost after the Pope’s death, but what just happened?

The Pope chose a heir. Didn’t that mean that the Pope managed to find a child with enough talent?

As a person who loved the Heavenly Demon Church dearly, this news made him indescribably happy.

“Before I show him to you, I need to ask you something.”

“Please, do.”

“I’m thinking of teaching this boy something other than Shura Environment. What do you think?”

Sunwu Jo Duk blinked a few times when he heard this. But he soon realized what the Pope was aiming to do, and opened his mouth with a serious face.

“It’s not going to be easy.”

“I know.”

The Heavenly Demon Church was a very religious group. In that group, the Pope was, in essence, god. That meant that he had to have the power to be able to prove it to the believers. In other words, a Pope of the Heavenly Demon Church needed tyrannical strength.

The Pope needed a power that seemed to be unattainable by humans. That was the mission given to the one chosen by the representation of god.

“I don’t want to let him inherit it without me taking care of the side effects. These kinds of annoying side effects, I should just end

it in my generation.”

“The old men aren’t going to like that.”

The tradition of the church. The tradition of the church was extremely important to the majority of the members. That naturally meant that if the Pope didn’t practice the Shura Environment, not many people were going to like him.

“It’s ok. I just have to show them it was a right decision.”

Sunwu Jo Duk thought a bit. Was there any other martial technique that could rival the power of the Shura Environment? There wasn’t.

Since the side effects of the Shura Environment seemed to trivial when compared to the actual power of the technique, the technique was passed on through the generations.

When Sunwu Jo Duk thought that much, he suddenly realized something, and opened his mouth.

“Is it the Moon Edge Blade Technique?”

“.....You’re perceptive. It is that technique.”

“Is that technique really that amazing?”

“Aah..... it is pretty interesting.”

Gongson Chun Gi grinned. It was a confident grin. Sunwu Jo Duk looked at that face of the Pope, and nodded.

“I’m not really against your decision. I trust your decision.”

“I knew you’d understand. And don’t worry. I didn’t say I wouldn’t pass on Shura Environment. When it comes to destructive power, there is literally nothing under the heavens that can rival it.”

Gongson Chun Gi thought of his disciple while talking, then made a depressed expression.

“But you know, my disciple actually has some resentment against the Alliance.”

“The Alliance?”

The Alliance was what held all the clans together, and its power rivaled that of the Shaolin temple. The Alliance’s power was so great, in fact, that many people commonly believed that the Alliance was more influential than the Shaolin temple.

In other words, they were hard to fight. Gongson Chun Gi, thinking that, scratched his cheeks and spoke.

“I already promised to help the child take revenge. I somewhat managed to understand what the boy was feeling, so that happened. I can’t help him directly, since he wants to take revenge with his own hands, but I want to do everything else in my power to help. I guess I’m still a bit immature when it comes to things like this.”

Gongson Chun Gi said this, and at the same time commanded Lim Hak Gyum to bring Cho Ryu Hyang. He once again opened his mouth.

“So when you see the boy, don’t ask him anything about the Alliance. It’ll just make him remember some bad stuff.”

“Alright.”

A little while later, Cho Ryu Hyang stepped into the room. It seemed that he calmed down a bit after a few days had passed. But he still seemed a little unstable.

“You’re here? Good. This is Sunwu Jo Duk, the man in charge of the church’s medicine department. Say hello. You’ll be relying on him a lot in the future.”

Cho Ryu Hyang bowed politely to Sunwu Jo Duk, and opened his mouth.

“My name is Cho Ryu Hyang. I’ll be in your care from now on.”

Sunwu Jo Duk observed Cho Ryu Hyang's body with a face filled with joy and satisfaction. His instincts as a doctor had kicked in. After a moment, Sunwu Jo Duk tilted his head in wonder.

“Huh? Did the young lord already go through Fa Mao Xi Sui (伐毛洗髓)?”

“Nah, he was already like that from the start. I was surprised, too.”

“No way.”

“I'm not lying.”

Fa Mao Xi Sui was a technique that experts used for their disciples in order to make a disciple's body be suited for training. It was extremely complicated, and used a lot of power, so it wasn't easy to use.

But the effects of the technique was truly amazing. It would essentially raise a person's training speed exponentially.

“May I take his pulse?”

“Of course.”

Once Sunwu Jo Duk got permission from the Pope, he obtained permission from the young lord, and grabbed the young lord's

wrist. When he tried putting in his energy into the young lord, he flinched.



“This is?”

Sunwu Jo Duk looked at Cho Ryu Hyang strangely. He then looked at Gongson Chun Gi, and spoke.

“.....Did you know?”

“Of course, my eyes aren’t just for show.”

Gongson Chun Gi grinned joyfully. Only Cho Ryu Hyang, the subject of this conversation, didn’t know what was going on.

“.....Is it the Bone-Changing Growth?”

“It’s similar. But I don’t think it’s the same thing. You know it, too, don’t you? Something like that definitely can’t happen.”

The Bone-Changing Growth was something that only happened in the harmonious stage. That was why it was impossible for a young child like this to go through that growth.

After all, a harmonious stage only happened once a person attained knowledge that would change their entire life.

“Then this.....”

Just what was this? The young lord’s body was already in the best possible condition in order to learn martial arts. The joints in the body were extremely flexible, and the energy veins in the body weren’t clogged at all.

‘And.....’

The strangest thing lay with the dantian. There was something

strange residing in it. Something small and round, and at the same time, hard. Something like that was just laying in the young lord's dantian.

That small sphere seemed to contain an immeasurable amount of energy.

“That boy studies something different from martial arts. I think his body changed like that because of whatever he was studying. Am I right?”

“.....”

Cho Ryu Hyang scratched his cheeks. What should he say? Should he reveal the existence of Zhuge Liang? Was that alright?

“I'm not angry at you or anything. I'm actually happy.”

Gongson Chun Gi realized a long time ago that this boy was hiding something other than mathematics. That was because Gongson Chun Gi's eyes could easily perceive things of that sort.

But he still pretended to not know about it. After all, everyone has a secret they want to keep.

Gongson Chun Gi wasn't selfish enough to try to force the secret out of his disciple. He simply believed that the boy would naturally come to tell him about it in the future.

“I finished checking the Moon Edge Blade Technique. That’s why I called you. To introduce this old man, and to tell you about the book.”

Cho Ryu Hyang’s eyes turned bright when he heard this. He could finally learn martial arts. He had to take revenge for his teacher as soon as he could.

That was the only way he could calm his tormented heart.

“Take it.”

Gongson Chun Gi took something out of his sleeve, and threw it at Cho Ryu Hyang. That thing landed directly on Cho Ryu Hyang’s open palms.

『The Moon Edge Blade Technique (月刃刀法)』

Gongson Chun Gi opened his mouth towards his dazed disciple.

“This is what you will be learning in the future.”

Cho Ryu Hyang stared at the book in his hands. This was the first meeting between Cho Ryu Hyang and Ak Jung Pae. A meeting that transcended a hundred years.

Chapter 43. The Secret Of The Moon Edge Blade Technique

Cho Ryu Hyang silently stared at the book on the table.

Ak Jung Pae.

The technique he used and created, the technique that disrupted the order of the world in a moment.

The Moon Edge Blade Technique.

If you think about it, this technique was the cause of his teacher's death.

When Cho Ryu Hyang thought that, he immediately felt that there was some sort of evil strings of fate that tied him to this book.

Cho Ryu Hyang opened the book with a complicated face.

『This world is unfair.』

The first sentence of the book started off with a light complaint. Cho Ryu Hyang kept reading without pausing.

『There is a person possessing immense talent, and there is a

person who works harder than anyone else. Which one would be the righteous one?』

Who is righteous? Wait, is there a correct answer to this in the first place? To Cho Ryu Hyang, it seemed like the question had no real answer.

『The one who possesses talent would be the righteous one. That was how the world worked.』

What did the author want to say? Cho Ryu Hyang became curious of Ak Jung Pae's motive. Because of that, he quickly turned to the next page.

『From a young age, I was able to figure out many things from just a tiny bit of information. I was something that people referred to as a genius. That fact always annoyed me.』

It was annoying to be a genius? This guy seemed really overconfident..... Cho Ryu Hyang snickered a little under his breath.

If he didn't know how famous Ak Jung Pae was in the past, he would've already thrown the book away.

『It didn't take long for me to figure out that I was very different compared to others. From a young age, I was able to replicate something I saw once perfectly. No, I could perform far better than the one who displayed the technique.』

Cho Ryu Hyang nodded when he read this. In this world, there existed people like this. Those kinds of people were exceedingly rare, but they did exist.

The kind of people who showed works that far outclassed the works of others even without trying. That was what a genius was.

『I felt a sense of defiance from that. I was angry at the fact that the efforts people put into their work got overshadowed in a moment by talent. Wasn't this too unfair? So I decided to fight the thing that I possessed, the thing that was referred as talent.』

Fight his own talent? What was that all about? It didn't make sense. Cho Ryu Hyang turned to the next page with confusion.

『I never had trouble learning something in my life. I never knew what the word “effort” truly was, since I never had the need to put effort into anything. My life had turned boring because of the bastard called talent.』

Cho Ryu Hyang spaced out for a second. So there really was a person like this in the world. Cho Ryu Hyang tried to understand what Ak Jung Pae felt at the time, and at the same time, he bitterly smiled.

In front of a genius like this, a work of a lifetime would look pitiful. Honestly, Cho Ryu Hyang didn't want to ever see a genius like this.

Thinking that, Cho Ryu Hyang turned the page.

『In order to fight talent, I needed to figure out exactly how big it was. What was its size? What was its power? Through multiple experiments, I needed to attain detailed information regarding talent. But that process took longer than expected. It took thirty whole years.』

There really were strange people in the world. That man used up thirty years just to find out the identity of talent?

『An extremely long time was used in order to find what the identity of talent. But during those thirty years, I attained a lot of things.』

A lot of things..... Just what did this person, this overconfident person who called himself a genius without shame, attain?

『Among all the things I attained, martial arts is one of them. Honestly, I actually don't know much about martial arts.』

Eh? What was this all of the sudden? Wasn't the Moon Edge Blade Technique a martial arts technique? Cho Ryu Hyang quickly turned to the next page with a face full of surprise.

『I only know how to make humans stronger.』

Of course that was the case.... Cho Ryu Hyang kept reading with slight relief.

『After figuring out the identity of talent, I went out into the martial world, for the first and the last time, with a sword. I wanted to see if the truth that I had discovered was the real thing.』

He went out into the martial world once? Cho Ryu Hyang read the next page with a little bit of confusion.

『After that, people started to call me the strongest expert under the heavens, the practitioner of the strongest martial art and whatnot. It was amusing. After all, I never learned martial arts in my life.』

Hm? Cho Ryu Hyang took off his glasses, and rubbed one of his eyes. He was confused. Never learning martial arts? Becoming the strongest, despite that? Just what happened to Ak Jung Pae during thirty years?

Also, he was a little annoyed that the guy kept getting readers really anxious about nothing. Cho Ryu Hyang wondered if he really had to read all this, but he quickly decided that he would rather finish the whole thing, rather than to just abandon it midway.

Cho Ryu Hyang put his glasses back on, and turned the page.

『The things I have written here teaches one to become strong.

This, however, is different from the likes of martial arts, so don't try to compare it with such pitiful things.』

Cho Ryu Hyang once again closed the book, and breathed deeply. Martial arts? Pitiful? It really began to feel like this book was trying to turn the reader into an idiot or something.

And why was a martial arts book like this talking about all this nonsense, and not say a single thing about martial arts?

That made him angry. He didn't know what others like Gongson Chun Gi thought, but right now, he was in a hurry. He didn't have a lot of time on his hands.

Because of that, Cho Ryu Hyang was getting a bit nervous.

‘There's nothing else in the world as sly as a human's emotions.’

The human mind is very sly. Because of that, it tends to go through changes very easily. This condition might actually cause Cho Ryu Hyang's thirst for revenge disappear.

No, even if it doesn't disappear, there's a chance that it might get altered, or fade in his mind a bit. There was no way he could let that happen. That's why he had to hurry.

This feeling he had now. Before this burning feeling in his mind disappeared, he had to reach the top.

Only when he did that would he be able to take what he wanted from the Alliance. After that fateful day, too much darkness had gathered in the corner of his mind.

‘I shouldn’t try to look at it.’

Cho Ryu Hyang bit his lips. He couldn’t look into this for too long. If he manages to fall in the darkness by accident, he would never be able to get out.

But he couldn’t just sit there, ignoring the darkness. That was because when his teacher, Jo Gi Chun died, the broken pieces of his heart gathered in that specific place.

He had to observe the darkness from a set distance at all times. This was so that he would never forget about what had happened on that day.



Cho Ryu Hyang shook his head a few times, returned to his previous, calm state, and looked at the book again. This book wasn't bad, but the introduction was too long.

The thing Cho Ryu Hyang wanted to learn wasn't Ak Jung Pae's past or anything. He just wanted that man's martial art. He just wanted to get ahold of the greatest martial art of an era.

‘Let's not get hasty.’

Cho Ryu Hyang stretched and exhaled, in order to soothe his tired body a bit. His teacher Gongson Chun Gi read this book, too.

As his teacher gave this to him after a long time of reviewing, this surely was the real thing. As he already had what he wanted, there

was no need to hurry.

He just had to read with an inquisitive mind. Thinking that, Cho Ryu Hyang reopened the book.

『I spent a lot of time in order to find what talent truly was. As I did so, I somehow began to talk with the things in my body. That was the beginning of it all.』

The things in his body? What's that? Cho Ryu Hyang quickly turned the page.

『Just talking with the things in my body, and borrowing their power was enough to call me the strongest under the heavens.』

Cho Ryu Hyang felt his heart pump a little faster before he turned the page. He instinctively knew that the true form of the Moon Edge Blade Technique was going to be revealed soon.

『I could see things at a thousand li away just by willing it. I could listen to just about anything by just willing it. I just had to think about what I wanted in order to receive it. I already had everything in the world (森羅萬象) in myself, but I was too foolish to understand that..』

He might be imagining things, but this seemed a little similar to what was written in the Moon Edge Flower Algorithm Magic. Just where did he see a similarity? Cho Ryu Hyang turned the page.

『I was able to take on the heavens just by borrowing strength from the things in my body. This what I have received during my quest to fight talent. This is what I have written in the book. The way to make people stronger. In other words, Borrowed Strength (借力).』

What? Borrowed Strength? Cho Ryu Hyang became extremely surprised. Was he misinformed of this whole thing? Borrowed Strength? Cho Ryu Hyang quickly turned the page.

『This book teaches one to be the strongest user of Borrowed Strength. I hope this helps someone of the future generations.』

Cho Ryu Hyang's face twisted. What he suspected was correct.

‘A user of Borrowed Strength.... this.....’

The Moon Edge Blade Technique. The strongest martial art in the world.

The true form of this technique was a book about Borrowed Strength.

“Kukuku, that boy should be stunned right now.”

“The young lord?”

“Yeah, he probably became really surprised.”

Gongson Chun Gi grinned mischievously while eating a feast laid in front of him. Sunwu Jo Duk, looking at that, swallowed his spit in nervousness.

Wasn't that face that the Pope had right now the one that came up when the Pope was about to pull a prank on someone? It seemed that the unlucky victim this time was the young lord.

“D..... Does the Moon Edge Blade Technique have something hidden in it?”

“Yup. Something big and scary.”

Gongson Chun Gi kept smiling mischievously while talking.

“It was so big, that even I almost failed to recognize it for what it was.”

Ak Jung Pae.

Gongson Chun Gi thought that the man's talent really lived up to the name.

“Is it really that amazing? That technique?”

When Sunwu Jo Duk asked this with curiosity, Gongson Chun Gi nodded.

“The old man made people get confused by calling it a Borrowed Strength and all that, but if you look closely, you can find the hidden truth in the book. That guy was pretty good.”

“Truth?”

Gongson Chun Gi nodded, and sipped on the alcohol in his hand.

“You know that saying, ‘All is Called by Your Heart’ (一切唯心造)?”

“Is it not a saying that is from the Huayanjing (華嚴經)?”

“Yeah, that. The Moon Edge Blade Technique contains the true meaning of the quote ‘All is Called by Your Heart’.”

“So it’s a buddhist text?”

“No, the author reached that truth in a different way from those monks. That’s what makes it so interesting. Even I learned something from it.”

Sunwu Jo Duk widened his eyes.

“Even a person like you learned something?”

Gongson Chun Gi nodded.

“I learned something because the author of that book managed to become as strong as me using a different method. The thing I learned was something insignificantly small, though.”

Sunwu Jo Duk’s jaw dropped. If his information was correct, Gongson Chun Gi was a stronger person than even the rumors implied.

The man had reached a height no one had ever reached before. The Pope passed the realm of the harmonious stage, and was currently in the realm of the gods.

Even an expert like that learned something from the Moon Edge Blade Technique? Didn’t that mean that that technique was a truly precious treasure?

“But no one other than me would be able to find that truth. That’s probably the only downside to that book. The order is really messed up.”

“The order?”

“Yeah, order. That’s the only problem. The guys that learned

martial arts at least once in their life would never be able to discover the hidden truth. After all, the whole book was written in a nonsensical, messy order.”

Gongson Chun Gi smiled. Ak Jung Pae, like the he had written in the book, had never learned martial arts.

You could easily see it from the way the book was written. The book ‘Moon Edge Blade Technique’ was actually a book on martial arts written by a man who didn’t know martial arts.

While Gongson Chun Gi thought of this ironic event, Sunwu Jo Duk swallowed his spit nervously, and asked something.

“Can you tell me how it was written?”

“What? You’re still interested in martial arts, in that age of all things?”

Sunwu Jo Duk smiled awkwardly.

“No way. It’s just curiosity.”

“Curiosity.....”

Gongson Chun Gi looked into Sunwu Jo Duk’s eyes, then smiled.

“Perhaps that book can indeed help you.”

Sunwu Jo Duk once again smiled awkwardly. He didn't realize that he'd ask someone about martial arts again in his lifetime. But this whole thing did get him curious.

Even Gongson Chun Gi got something out of the book. If he did well, perhaps he, too, would gain some insights.

He was stuck at the gates to the harmonious stage for several decades now. He wanted to advance into the harmonious stage as soon as possible.

“The Moon Edge Blade Technique teaches a little child how to run, instead of teaching him how to walk first.”

How would you teach a child to run before walking? It didn't make sense.

“I think I know why the book was named ‘Moon Edge Blade Technique’, despite it not involving blades at all. Anyways, it's been a while since I last picked up something this interesting.”

Was it because he didn't expect anything? When Gongson Chun Gi tried to imagine the power of the Moon Edge Blade Technique, he became a little sad.

The power that that technique contained was on par with the one that Gongson Chun Gi had. That would mean that Gongson Chun

Gi would've been able to go all out on Ak Jung Pae. He was just sad that he wasn't born at the same era as Ak Jung Pae.

It had been a long time since alcohol tasted this bitter.

Chapter 44. The Young Master Of The Heavenly Demon Church

The place known as Nanman was actually a really hot place. The place was full of southern trees, and the mountains were filled with edible fruit.

A land where no one had to worry about getting starved to death.

But this land was often avoided by travelers and merchants. There were fierce predators roaming about everywhere, and it was also filled to the brim with bugs that contained lethal poison.

Only a certain group of people occupied this land that was both blessed and cursed by god.

Nanman Beast Gate. This land was practically made for them by god.

“You seem excited. I haven’t seen that in a while.”

“Is that right?”

The owner of the Nanman Beast Gate. The one holding the title of the Beast King, and the god of the Nanman region.

Gu Ma Byuk (九魔劈).

He looked at his oldest child, while emitting a kingly aura.

“It seems that your trip this time was pretty amusing. You look unusually excited.”

Gu Hui.

He didn't deny it. After all, he was indeed excited right now. That day, he managed to see the fight between Gongson Chun Gi and Baek Mu Ryang. There, he managed to see something that others did not get to see.

Each and every scene of that battle became nutrients that helped Gu Hui's growth, and made him feel a feeling of excitement unlike what he had ever felt before.

“I saw the power of the mainland.”

This experience would possibly help him form the schedule for the future.

The ambition of the Nanman Beast Gate. The experience he had in the mainland would definitely help him achieve that.

“So, were you able to grasp their size?”

Gu Hui smiled, as Gu Ma Byuk brought his cup to his mouth.

“Yes.”

Gongson Chun Gi and Baek Mu Ryang. The two experts who fought for supremacy. Gu Hui had clearly engraved their battle in his mind.

From the heavy breaths of the experts, to every single strand of hair that shone from sweat. Gu Hui did not miss a single scene.

“So, what is your conclusion?”

Gu Hui paused a bit at Gu Ma Byuk’s question. He simply stared at his father, the shining sun of Nanman, without speaking. His face clearly reflected worry and hesitation.

“You don’t have to hide it. Just tell me what you saw.”

Gu Hui looked at his father for a few more seconds, then spoke with some difficulty.

“.....Please let me be the one to carry on our ambition. It’s impossible to achieve the ambition of the main gate in your generation.”

That’s right. It was possible to take care of Baek Mu Ryang, but not Gongson Chun Gi. Gongson Chun Gi was a monster. That was the conclusion Gu Hui reached.

But unexpectedly, Gu Ma Byuk didn't really show a reaction when he heard that.

“Is that right?”

“Yes. I don't know about Baek Mu Ryang, but Gongson Chun Gi is definitely going to be difficult.”

Difficult. When he heard that, Gu Ma Byuk rested his chin on his fist, and looked at his child. He wasn't angry. After all, he was expecting something like this already.

Perhaps it was because of the unique environment, but the Nanman region always managed to produce heirs who possessed a terrifying degree of talent.

Even among all the talented individuals of the Nanman Beast Gate, Gu Hui stood out in particular. That was because the boy's intelligence was unprecedentedly great.

‘So, there's no hope.’

Gu Ma Byuk fell deep in thought with a bitter smile in his mind. Yes, Gongson Chun Gi's name was well known, even in a place like Nanman. That was because Nanman was actually closer to the Heavenly Demon Church than the Alliance.

Thanks to that, Nanman knew about the church's power very well. The people of Nanman were able to notice the huge amount of strength hidden away in the church.

‘But.....’

Even if the church was infested with powerful experts, there was only one man that Gu Ma Byuk was worried about.

The Pope.

He only got a chance to get a glimpse of the Pope a long time ago, but the memory of the aura that the Pope exuded back then still remained in his mind, as clear as day.

Clack–

Gu Ma Byuk put his cup in his hand on the table, and opened his mouth.

“Is it ok if I entrust the future of the main gate to you?”

The future of the Nanman Beast Gate. Their old ambition. It would be advancing into the mainland. Gu Hui knew this well. That's why he looked into his father's eye without any fear or hesitation, and spoke.

“Only I will be able to accomplish the ambition of the main gate.”

A confident voice. Gu Hui had conviction. He was confident that there was no one as strong as he, at least in his generation.

Gu Ma Byuk too, believed that if it was his child, then surely the main gate's dream would be achieved easily. After all, his son was a monster.

‘But there are many monsters in this world.’

Yes. The world was needlessly big. That's what got Gu Ma Byuk a little worried.

‘To think it was Borrowed Power.....’

Cho Ryu Hyang was in a state of shock. He had a lot of expectations for this book, so naturally the shock he got when he found out that this book didn't teach martial arts was naturally also great.

“You okay?”

Gongson Chun Gi gleefully stared at his disciple's dumb expression.

‘Do you really think I'd be ok?’

Cho Ryu Hyang wanted to shout this in his teacher's face, but stopped himself. He simply looked out the moving carriage with dull eyes.

Why did his teacher give him a book like this? Cho Ryu Hyang had seen a user of Borrowed Power in a circus a long time ago with his father.

It was an intriguing new world he had discovered. There were people who could break rocks with a mere shout, and freely control giant balls of fire.

It really looked amazing to him at the time. But that was it. It just looked amazing. He couldn't defeat the Alliance with that.

Cho Ryu Hyang leaned on the carriage wall with a dark face, and began to fiddle with the door crack with his fingers.

He wanted to say something, but didn't know how to say it. Gonson Chun Gi, looking at that, couldn't take it anymore and exploded in a fit of laughter.

"Puhahaha! Looks like our little disciple was very, very disappointed with what he found."

"....."

It would be a lie to say that he wasn't disappointed. Seeing the person who knew that better than any other laugh like that, Cho Ryu Hyang began to laugh a little, too.

So he laughed. He laughed with a gloomy face. When Gongson Chun Gi saw this strange scene, he gripped onto his stomach and began to laugh again.

Just how long had he laughed? Gongson Chun Gi somehow managed to become calm again, looked at his disciple, and spoke.

“Humans have neither powerful claws nor teeth like predators.”

“.....”

“That's why humans began to make tools to hunt these predators. These tools soon became 'weapons' as time went on, and this weapon kept advancing so that it became more and more efficient at murder.”

“.....?”

What was his teacher talking about, all of the sudden? When Cho Ryu Hyang made a confused face, Gongson Chun Gi smiled and said this.

“I knew it. You haven't read any more of the book after the part where it said 'how to be a user of Borrowed Power'.”

“.....Yes.”

Indeed. He didn't read any more than that part. He had put the book aside in a box in disappointment.

“The true form of the Moon Edge Blade Technique is quite amazing. I'll guarantee that. It starts to reveal itself after the part where you got disappointed. So don't be so sad.”

Cho Ryu Hyang put his head down. He didn't know how to respond to his teacher's words.

“Disciple.”

“Yes, teacher.”

“You're getting too hurried after Jo Gi Chun's death. But the thing you want to achieve can't necessarily be done by being hurried. You need to look at your surroundings with more of a relaxed mind. Isn't that right?”

Again, Cho Ryu Hyang couldn't really say anything. He just looked at the floor with guilt.

“We'll be arriving at the destination soon. Just rest for now today.”

“.....Alright.”

He felt a bit ashamed. Cho Ryu Hyang began to fiddle with the door crack with his fingers again, with an entirely different mind this time.

Sharak-

Cho Ryu Hyang opened the Moon Edge Blade Technique again. They were going to arrive at the Ten Thousand Great Mountains tomorrow. The symbol of fear, the Ten Thousand Great Mountains. It was the land where the Heavenly Demon Church resided.

Almost nothing was known about the insides of the Ten Thousand Great Mountains. The Heavenly Demon Church was, after all, a society shrouded in secrets.

But right now, that wasn't really important to Cho Ryu Hyang. He was only focused on the Moon Edge Blade Technique.

Like teacher had said, the more important parts began to appear after the part where he stopped reading.

‘Turning the human body into a weapon.....’

This was an interesting concept. The body itself becoming a

weapon.

A weapon that can't be broken by anything, but in turn can destroy anything. The technique was all about taking the body's strength far above human limits.

‘And that would be the Lian (練).’

The first part of the total thirty parts of the Moon Edge Blade Technique was known as Lian. The learning of this Borrowed Power begins from Lian. Like that, Cho Ryu Hyang slowly fell into the Moon Edge Blade Technique.

“We’re here. Get down.”

“.....”

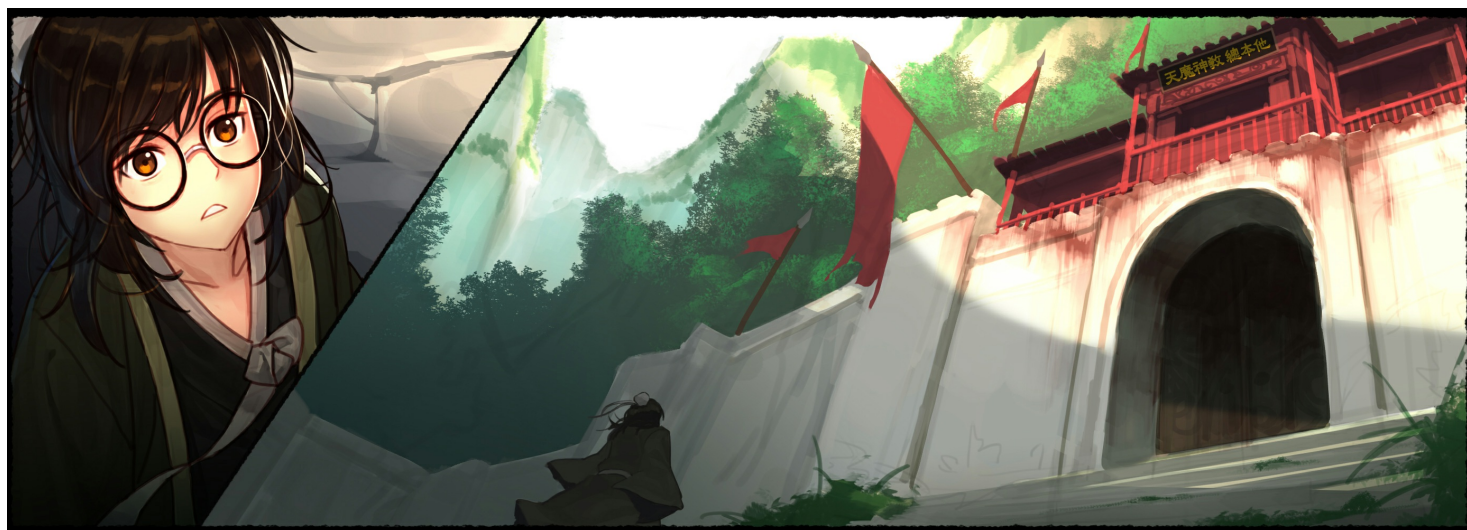
Cho Ryu Hyang got off the carriage with a tired face. When he stepped down, he froze like a statue. The giant mountain in front of him. When he saw that, he realized that he was at the Ten Thousand Great Mountains.

“This is my house. Looks good, doesn’t it?”

Cho Ryu Hyang just nodded. He couldn’t respond because his mouth was wide open.

The Ten Thousand Great Mountains. It was a giant fortress. There were castle walls that encompassed the whole mountain.

And there was that. That thing in front of him. That enormous red door.



‘Blood Lightning Gate (血雷門)’

This was the famed Blood Lightning Gate. The gate that was said to have turned red thanks to the blood of the countless enemies that attacked the church in the past. This was the symbol of the bloody history of the church.

At the top of the gate, was a big sign that was written with thick, strong brushstrokes.

『Heavenly Demon Church (天魔神教) Headquarters (總本他)』

Gongson Chun Gi ruffled his surprised disciple’s hair a little, and

spoke.

“This is the place the martial world refers to as the Ten Thousand Great Mountains. And this is going to be your home from now. How is it?”

What should he say? There was some kind of a feeling boiling up inside him, but he couldn't really explain what it was.

While he had been searching an answer in his mind, the giant red gates began to open in front of his eyes.

Krrr–

The door opened with a stiff sound.

Koong–!

When the door completely opened, Cho Ryu Hyang was able to see the splendor that lay inside. When he saw that, he froze once more. That was because he was able to see the reason why the Ten Thousand Great Mountains was feared by martial artists of the world.

Inside the gates. There were people.

“They did a troublesome thing.”

Gongson Chun Gi slowly walked in with a smile on his face. Once he entered the door, the man on the front began to shout.

“Heavenly Demon Bow (天魔仰伏)!”

A voice that shook the mountain itself. But the sound that came in response was even bigger than that.

“May the church rule under the heavens (新教天下)!”

A sound that seemed loud enough to shake the very earth itself.

Koom—!

Because of the sound of the feet hitting the floor simultaneously, Cho Ryu Hyang was unable to come back to his senses. The martial artists that were standing in a line on two sides were all welcoming Cho Ryu Hyang and Gongson Chun Gi.

“Looks like the old guys really put some efforts into this.”

Gongson Chun Gi grinned, and walked through the door. The Pope had gotten used to greetings of this scale a long time ago.

But that wasn't the case for Cho Ryu Hyang. He experienced something similar to this before, but not on a scale this big. Seven out of the ten groups in the church came out.

Just for the Pope, and the Pope's disciple. The energy these veterans were exuding from their body really was overpowering.

The energy they were exuding was so great, that just watching them rendered Cho Ryu Hyang unable to breathe. His head was beginning to turn blank.

[Don't get intimidated. These guys are on your side.]

Cho Ryu Hyang only came back to his senses when he heard the Pope's playful message. After swallowing his spit, he put on his usual, calm face again.

‘Yes, they’re not my enemies.’

The enemies were the Alliance. These guys were allies. The most reliable allies in the world. Cho Ryu Hyang burned that thought into his mind, and followed Gongson Chun Gi.

Gongson Chun Gi, after walking for a bit, stopped at a certain point. There were some people standing in front of him.

About twenty people. The man at the front of this group bowed to the Pope, and spoke up.

“Welcome back, Your hHoliness.”

“Yeah. You must’ve been tired.”

“I just did what I had to do.”

The bald middle-aged man with thick eyebrows. Starting with him, everyone behind began to greet the Pope.

When they finished doing that, their gazes all focused onto Cho Ryu Hyang. Every single one of them had intense gazes that burrowed into the boy. When Gongson Chun Gi saw this, he smiled.

“Heh, old men..... I almost forgot to introduce him. This is my disciple.”

When Gongson Chun Gi said this, everyone’s face turned bright. They were waiting to hear this.

“Inner Commander Gang Chang greets the young lord!”

“Outer Commander Ugil greets the young lord!”

“Church Instructor Jang Gak greets the young lord!”

Every single one of them had an immense voice. Many others greet Cho Ryu Hyang after them, and every single one of these people had one emotion in their voice.

Happiness.

The eyes that looked at Cho Ryu Hyang, the voice that came out when talking to Cho Ryu Hyang was filled to the brim with happiness.

‘Was it to this degree?’

Their expectations for the heir of the church literally emanated from their bodies.

But strangely, their expectations didn’t seem very pressuring. It seemed something about himself had changed.

“I am called Cho Ryu Hyang.”

“Ooh!”

He had just replied, but everyone shouted in glee. Cho Ryu Hyang wondered just how much these people had waited for a disciple.

Their happiness simply served to show how much they had worked to find a disciple previously.

“Che, you’re overreacting..... get back to your work. I’ll stay and rest with this boy. Also, let the boys you brought out here have some rest, too.”

“Alright.”

Gongson Chun Gi spoke, while observing the Inner Commander direct everyone back to their respective places.

“You might not know right now, but they’re all quite talented people. I’m a lucky person.”

Cho Ryu Hyang nodded, and opened his mouth.

“They look talented in my eyes as well.”

The Inner Commander was able to direct that many people without causing even a bit of commotion, and the people were able to follow the commander’s commands quickly.

Gongson Chun Gi glanced at Cho Ryu Hyang as he walked up a set of staircases. He put on his usual playful smile, and spoke.

“You should take in the people who will serve you here.”

“What do you mean?”

“Choose a guard who will protect you with his life. That’s what I mean.”

“.....”

Guard?

“I could choose for you, but that guard would be my subordinate, not yours, right? You find the the person you want on your own. Entrust your life to that person.”

Entrust his life? What did that mean? Cho Ryu Hyang fingered his glasses, and made a serious face.

“I’m sure you know, but the martial world is a place filled with unexpected things. In a place like this, a person who can protect you is very important. Especially when you are weak like this.”

It was true. But who should he choose? When Cho RYU Hyang put on a serious face, Gongson Chun Gi spoke.

“Well, we can handle that in the future..... Did you see the Moon Edge Blade Technique?”

Cho Ryu Hyang nodded.

“Yeah? How was it?”

“.....It was hard.”

“I’m sure it was.”

Gongson Chun Gi paused a bit, then opened his mouth.

“Want some advice?”

That was what he had wanted. Cho Ryu Hyang’s eyes sparkled as he looked at his teacher.

“Please.”

Gongson Chun Gi rubbed his chin, and spoke.

“Don’t think about it too hard. There’s a need to see everything easier sometimes. After all, the truth is usually simpler than you might think.”

There’s a need to see everything easily? How? That was the advice? Gongson Chun Gi put on a mysterious face, and walked up ahead.

“I’ll take you to the place where you’ll stay for now. Think about it over there.”

Gongson Chun Gi’s teaching method. It was a way to make one to think and feel by oneself, and reach the truth. It was completely different from Jo Gi Chun’s method, which explained everything for the student.

Cho Ryu Hyang, while thinking about his teacher’s advice,

followed Gongson Chun Gi to the back part of the church. As the back part of the church was placed on a high place, Cho Ryu Hyang only reached the top when he was nearly exhausted.

What lay in front of him was a well-decorated park with a small pond. The centre of the pond held a small pagoda that seemed to be created by a master builder.

It was something that was neither simple nor fancy. But that somehow gave one the feeling of the master of the pond being a high-class person.

“That place over there is the place where you’ll stay.”

Dragon Tower. It was a house that contained a small library inside it. When Cho Ryu Hyang stepped into the castle, he could see a big room filled with expensive furniture.

He liked it the moment he saw it. Gongson Chun Gi smiled when he saw that.

“I’ll go talk to the old men for a while. Let’s eat a meal together when I return.”

“Ok.”

“If you need anything, just pull that rope over there. Some boys will come to help you out.”

“Yes.”

Cho Ryu Hyang went back out after Gongson Chun Gi disappeared. This place was strangely comforting, even though it was his first time here.

While he was thinking about the Moon Edge Blade Technique while walking around, he could feel someone watching him.

‘Who?’

When Cho Ryu Hyang turned left, he saw someone. That person froze when Cho Ryu Hyang turned.

It was a girl in fancy clothes. She had a beautiful blonde hair, with mysterious emerald eyes. The girl looked at Cho Ryu Hyang a bit, and blinked. She opened her mouth.

“Who are you?”

This was the first meeting between her and Cho Ryu Hyang.

Chapter 45. Meeting

“Where did she run off again? What did I tell you about paying attention to her, huh? Do you really want to be punished?”

“S.. sorry, big sis. I didn’t think she’d run again.”

“You think this would be all over just by saying sorry?”

The older sister out of two bodyguards, Rin (麟), was about to say something with an angry face, but just gave up and sighed.

“I told you not to be fooled by her innocent outer appearance. She’s always thinking about running away in the inside.”

“Uu, sorry, big sis..... I forgot.”

“Ugh, you idiot. You stress me out so much.... Go find her! You know what would happen if the higher-ups find out what happened, don’t you? We both get this.”

Rin made a slicing motion on her neck with her finger, and made a terrible face.

“S, sorry!”

“If you know that, hurry. She shouldn’t have gone far.”

“Ok!”

Two women in red clothes. They began to run around the castle urgently. How long did they search for? After a while, the younger sister of the duo, Ryung (鈴), opened her mouth with a terrified face.

“It doesn’t look like she’s in the castle. What do we do?”

“Did she get out already?”

That would be troubling. Outside the castle, the places the duo had access to would be a lot more restricted. It was even worse for the young lady they served.

A rare, precious position. If you add on the girl’s unique looks to that position, the girl became an existence that couldn’t be revealed to the public. After all, if the word of her existence spread, everything would really become troublesome.

“You go to the main auditorium. I’ll check the back.”

Ryung made a confused expression when her bigger sister said this.

“Not many people can go to the back part of the church, right? You said it was a dangerous place before.....”

“Don’t worry. I’ll get permission from the administrator of the place. And if the young lady really is there, things would proceed easier than one might think.”

“It would be good if it was really like that.....”

Ryung looked at Rin with a worried face.

“You think you have time to actually get worried about someone? Just go to the main auditorium. If the higher-ups find out before we find the young lady, we’re dead! Dead!”

When Rin sliced her neck with her finger again, Ryung began to run like a startled deer. Rin, looking at that, began to walk quickly.

Grass Shoe Garden (草鞋庭). This was what the people called the forbidden garden. It was a place where not many could enter, and was also one of the most secluded place within the church.

At the same time, it was one of the most dangerous places in the whole church. Rin had reached the entrance a while ago, but was unable to get in. She bit her lower lip.

‘As I thought, this is too much for me.’

At first glance, it didn't look like there was anyone there, but that wasn't the case in real life.

Top-class assassins, hand picked by the church, were placed all around the garden, extending from the entrances to everywhere inside the garden itself.

Rin hesitated when she felt the dangerous energy these people were exuding. She had to choose here. Even for her, a peak expert, charging into the garden was suicide.

After hesitating for quite some time in front of the main entrance, Rin sighed and opened her mouth.

“I wish to see the Administrator of the Garden.”

“.....”

There was no answer. But there was a response. She knew that because all of the sudden, an overwhelming amount of killing intent began to pressurise her.

‘It gets important from here.’

She was crossing a dangerous line right here. Rin forcefully stopped herself from instinctively reaching for her sword, and quietly closed her eyes.

And when she opened her eyes again, she could see him. The man who had gray cloth draped over himself. The man who had his face, except for his eyes, covered in the cloth, was standing in front of the entrance.

When Rin faced the man, she became convinced.

‘This is the administrator!’

The administrator of the garden was a man that no one really knew about. No one knew of the man’s origin, nor did they know how the man learnt martial arts.

A strange martial artist whose face, age, and martial cultivation was unknown to the public.

Except for the Pope, even the Eight Guardians who boasted their great strength stayed quiet here. All that was because of the administrator.

Clop clop–

Rin could feel that with the appearance of this man, the killing intent around her vanished, as if it was just an illusion. The air around this man was strange. A strange feeling of disharmony surrounded the man’s body.

“What do you want?”

The man's voice was unexpectedly young. When Rin made a surprised face, the man spoke again.

This time, the voice held no emotion whatsoever. It was only filled with dreadful coldness.

“I don't say the same thing twice.”

Killing intent. Rin was brought back to reality at once when she got hit by the killing intent, which had been polished like a treasured sword.

“Ah! I, I am Rin of the Ruling Fire House (理火宮). I am the bodyguard of the young lady.”

Rin looked at the man with some sweat running down her back. She couldn't sense the level of cultivation this man had reached.

‘What's this? Could he be a harmonious expert?’

Rin shook her head at the thought. That shouldn't be possible. Other than the two guardians and the Pope, no one else in the church had reached that state.

But Rin was feeling this powerful pressure emanating from the man's eyes, since a while back. She had experienced such a feeling only a few times in her life.

“You came to retrieve the young lady?”

“Yes.”

Thankfully, the young lady seemed to be in here. Rin sighed in relief.

“May I take the young lady away?”

“That’s not possible.”

“Eh? Why?”

The man spoke with a cold voice, while looking at Rin.

“You cannot enter this place.”

Yes. But that was obvious. No one could enter this place without requesting to beforehand.

The young lady could get anywhere, as her existence itself worked like a free pass to anything, but that wasn’t the case for Rin. But that didn’t mean she was going to back down here.

“Please give me permission. If that’s too much, please at least send word to the young lady.....”

“I refuse.”

A dry voice, void of all emotion. Rin’s mouth started to go dry.

“Administrator, this matter concerns me and my sister’s life. Please reconsider.”

Rin kneeled onto the cold, hard ground.

“Please, I beg you.”

Rin slowly put her head down. She threw away her pride a long time ago. As long as she came here, she would be unable to stop the rumors spreading.

The young lady’s unauthorized little trip. It was a severe crime. But since it had happened already, Rin had to take the young lady back to the castle as soon as possible.

That way, she’d at least have some time to figure out how to take care of the aftermath. Rin waited for the man’s response on the ground.

The man who was looking at Rin. The administrator didn’t speak for a while. How much time had passed? The man eventually opened his mouth.

“How amusing. Why should I care about your life?”

“.....”

Rin didn't know what to say. While she was trying to figure out what to say, the man turned around.

“Go back.”

“Administrator!”

Rin crawled forward, desperately trying to grab onto the administrator's legs. Then.

Shwit–

Something passed by Rin's cheeks, and created a small injury. A hot feeling of pain like fire ran through her cheeks.

“You'll go no further than that. Come closer and I'll slice off your neck.”

Rin froze from fear. Then, a black shadow suddenly came behind the administrator, and whispered something.

After hearing that, the administrator's eyes began to turn annoyed. Rin didn't fail to miss the administrator's shaking eyes at

that moment.

‘Something happened?’

Something troublesome. Rin realized that something like that took place just now.

‘What is it?’

Nothing really happens in the Garden. It was normally very quiet, and didn’t go through much change. In a place like that, something happened.

‘Could it be?’

Rin prayed that this event would be something that might be able to be advantageous for her. Did her prayers get answered? The administrator looked at her with annoyance and spoke.

“.....You said you wanted to go inside?”

Rin nodded vigorously.

“Yes. I want to go inside.”

“Follow me. I’ll take you to the young lady.”

The man said that, and went through the door. Rin quickly stood up, and followed the man inside.

“Thank you!”

“.....”

The man didn’t respond. He simply kept walking.

‘Thank god.’

Rin felt relieved. Something might’ve happened inside. But thanks to that, she got a chance like this, which made her infinitely grateful.

“It’s there.”

The other side of the pond. The young lady was clearly over there. The person who was more precious to Rin than her life. But Rin didn’t move, and froze where she stood.

There was a boy standing in front of the young lady. Rin’s jaw dropped.

“Th, th, that.....”

The administrator observed her actions, nodded, and sent a message.

[I'll be truthful. Because of the way you handled things, we got into a bit of trouble, too.]

“.....”

Got into trouble? What kind of trouble?

[The young lady meeting with the young lord. That's what got us in a bit of a tight situation.]

The young lord? Rin's eyes widened. The administrator had the same power as the Guardians within the church.

But even a person like that addressed the boy like so? Just who was that boy? The administrator, who noticed Rin's surprised face, sent a message.

[That young lord is the one who will take care of the church in the future.]

“.....!”

Rin's eyes got even wider, and her lips began to tremble. Taking care of the church in the future. She knew what those words meant.

She looked at the boy some more, and then sent a message with an agitated face.

[He is the heir? That young lord?]

[That's right.]

The boy. Cho Ryu Hyang was a person who would become the heir of the church in the future. Of course, the boy was being treated like one already, but the official ceremony was yet to take place.

“Who are you?”

Far away, Rin could see the girl with the golden hair open her mouth in front of Cho Ryu Hyand. Rin watched this take place quietly.

The young lady. The girl in the golden hair rarely ever talked to a child of her age. That was because of the unique looks and the high position she possessed.

‘The fact that she is different is enough reason to incite fear.’

Because of that, the young lady had been confined in the castle despite her high position. She was like a bird stuck in a cage.

A foreigner. As the nation didn't come in contact with foreigners much, it wasn't strange for foreigners to be called monsters.

‘I hope she doesn't get hurt.....’

Everyone who saw the young lady previously all had the same reaction. They were all scared of her. Rin thought that Cho Ryu Hyang would obviously have the same reaction.

But that wasn't the case. The boy calmly opened his mouth without any indication of being surprised.

“Who are you supposed to be, then? Shouldn't one introduce oneself before asking for someone else's name?”

When Cho Ryu Hyang said this, the girl blinked. She, too, had never seen a person who acted normally to her like this.

The blonde girl grinned, and spoke.

“Ah, is that how it is? My name is Gongson Ahri (公孫娥異). What about you?”

Gongson Ahri? Cho Ryu Hyang's eyes shook. When he heard the girl's name, he thought of someone's face. Cho Ryu Hyang opened his mouth with a bit of disbelief.

“Gongson Chun Gi..... what's your relationship with teacher?”

“Ah, he’s my father.”

Cho Ryu Hyang fondled his glasses unconsciously. It was a habit of his that came out whenever he became surprised. Gongson Chun Gi’s daughter?



What surprised him here wasn’t the fact that his teacher had a daughter. He was surprised by the daughter’s sudden appearance. The administrator, watching that, sent a message to Rin.

[The Pope instructed me to not let the young lord meet anyone for the time being.]

The administrator stopped his message here, and spoke again while throwing an angry gaze at Rin.

[But the young lady isn't someone we can stop in the first place. Because you did your job poorly, something like this happened.]

Rin lowered her head, and avoided the administrator's gaze. She didn't have any excuses to say.

[This whole thing is your fault, so you take care of it.]

Rin nodded. She felt the need to take care of everything at this point, somehow.

Chapter 46. A Father's Feelings

“Dad.”

“Mm.”

“Why don't I have a mom?”

Gongson Chun Gi, who had been watching the pond with his daughter on his knee, paused for a moment.

He then retrieved his hand, which had been stroking his daughter's hair, and thought. Children always manage to stab people with questions like this without thinking about it.

Adults can't get anxious, especially at times like this. They can't try to change the topic, either. Gongson Chun Gi soon returned to his normal self, and smiled.

“Ahri.”

“Yes, dad?”

“Are you uncomfortable because you have no mom?”

Gongson Ahri thought a bit. Uncomfortable? Sure, she knew that she was different from others, but she didn't know if that made her uncomfortable. After thinking for quite some time, the girl

shook her head and spoke.

“I’m not sure.”

Since she never had a mother in the first place, she wasn’t sure what the difference between having one and not having one was.

“Did your friends say something to you about that?”

“.....”

Gongson Ahri didn’t answer her father’s random question, and hesitated a bit. Gongson Chun Gi felt something ominous when he saw that.

A feeling that parents feel. That’s what he felt. Gongson Chun Gi immediately lifted his daughter high up in the air, and stared at her in the eye.

He looked straight into her daughter’s beautiful emerald eyes, and spoke.

“Ahri.”

“Yes, dad?”

“What did I say about lying?”

Gongson Ahri replied with a face filled with fear.

“Dragonflies.....”

From a young age, Gongson Ahri feared dragonflies quite a lot. She was afraid of the dragonfly’s unique faceted eyes.

“I told you a hundred dragonflies would come for you in a dream if you lied, right?”

“Yes.....”

“You have to speak truthfully from here, then.”

Young Gongson Ahri nodded vigorously, enough to visibly shake her pink cheeks a little. Gongson Chun Gi then threw a direct question at his daughter.

“Who’s the one that’s bothering you?”

Gongson Ahri stayed silent for a while when she heard the question. She then slowly swallowed her spit out of nervousness, and spoke just about when Gongson Chun Gi’s patience was about to run out.

“Dad.”

“Yeah, just tell me.”

“.....Am I a monster?”

“.....What?”

“Was my mom a monster?”

Monster? Gongson Chun Gi’s face stiffened. The thing that he was most worried about had finally happened.

“Was that what your friends were saying?”

Gongson Ahri paused a bit, then nodded. When Gongson Chun Gi’s face stiffened even more, Gongson Ahri spoke in a worried tone.

“The nanny told me to not tell you that because you’d get worried. So I tried to lie. Sorry, dad.”

Gongson Chun Gi felt his daughters tiny hand rub against one of his cheeks, and sighed deeply.

When he did that, the thing that was about to erupt out of himself slowly subsided. Right. This wasn’t something that could be solved by getting angry in the first place.

Children are honest, and straightforward. That didn't go for just Gongson Ahri. All children were like this.

To children who were like that, Gongson Ahri's unique, beautiful looks must've looked quite strange.

'Damn it.'

He was able to understand with his mind, but his heart couldn't accept it.

Gongson Chun Gi was able to shrug off most things without batting an eye, thanks to training his mental capacity for long periods of time. But when it came to things like this, it seemed he, like many others, became a normal father.

"Are you ok, dad?"

Gongson Chun Gi didn't respond to his daughter's worried voice. That was because he felt like he would swear if he opened his mouth now.

But unexpectedly, his chaotic mind became organized relatively quickly.

'This is actually a good thing.'

This was a chance. A chance to organize everything at once. Gongson Chun Gi put on his usual face of relaxation again, and smiled.

“Hm, come to think of it, your mother might’ve really not been human.”

“What?”

When Gongson Ahri looked at her father with eyes as big as saucers, Gongson Chun Gi stroked her hair and smiled mischievously.

“I still can’t believe that there would actually be a human as beautiful as her among humans. Yeah, your mom’s definitely not human.”

Gongson Ahri, who had been observing her father carefully, asked a question with a serious face.

“Then, was mom a pretty monster?”

Gongson Chun Gi inwardly smiled when he saw his daughter’s serious face.

“No. What makes you think that? Do I really look like I have low standards like that?”

Gongson Ahri shook her head. Her father was the strongest man on earth. He was a man who could fight the world on his own.

When Gongson Ahri was looking at her father with eyes full of respect, Gongson Chun Gi lowered his voice and began to whisper.

“Those kids know wong. This is a secret, but I’ll tell you about it.”

“What is it?”

When Gongson Ahri began to whisper, too, Gongson Chun Gi brought his mouth next to his daughter’s ears and spoke.

“Your mom was actually a fairy.”

“What?”

When Gongson Ahri began to blink her wide eyes in surprise, Gongson Chun Gi put his finger up into the sky and spoke.

“Don’t you know about fairies? The ones that live up in the sky castle?”

Gongson Ahri tried to say something about her father’s nonchalant act. But before she could, Gongson Chun Gi ruffled her hair, and said something.

“You know, humans instinctively fear what is stronger than them. And when they see something unusual, something different than them, they try to make it look worse than them. Humans are really narrow-minded, aren’t they?”

“.....”

“But don’t worry. Sometimes, there comes people like daddy here, who really have good eyes. And when you meet a person like that, you’ll know. You’ll realize what the real thing is like..... so don’t worry about what the idiots say, ok?”

Gongson Ahri didn’t say anything, and just tightly held onto her father’s hand.



Cho Ryu Hyang stared at Gongson Ahri. Gongson Ahri, too, stared at Cho Ryu Hyang. The two didn't avoid their gaze, and looked into each other's eyes for a while.

They were looking at each other as if they were having a staring contest. The one to look away first was, unexpectedly, Gongson Ahri.

‘It feels weird.’

She had never looked at someone in the eyes for so long, save Gongson Chun Gi. After all, everyone whose eyes met with hers was quick to look away.

She didn't know why they were doing that in the past, but now, she could see why they looked away. Once you look at someone straight in the eye, it feels like your mind can be read by the other person.

“What's your name?”

Gongson Ahri sighed in relief, and asked this question with a calm face. When she looked away, she felt a little calmer than before.

“.....”

Cho Ryu Hyang wrinkled his brows a little bit, and answered while looking at Gongson Ahri.

“Cho Ryu Hyang.”

He had heard from Um Seung Do that he didn't need to pay respect to anyone in the church, but this person here was still Gongson Chun Gi's daughter.

How should he respond? His answer became short without him realizing it. Thankfully, Gongson Ahri didn't get offended by his attitude one bit.

“Cho Ryu Hyang, Ryu Hyang..... It’s a pretty name.”

Gongson Ahri repeated Cho Ryu Hyang’s name several times quietly, and grinned. Cho Ryu Hyang quickly turned away when he saw that.

Watching the girl made him feel a little weird for some reason.

Right then.

Clap–!

Gongson Ahri, who had been grinning till now, clapped her hands and spoke.

“Ah! You’re dad’s new disciple, right?”

When Cho Ryu Hyang nodded, Gongson Ahri became a little amazed. She knew about it. She knew how much her father worked to find a disciple.

‘His standards were too high.’

Gongson Chun Gi’s standards for picking someone was high. Perhaps a little too high..... The boy that her father, her father with really high standards, chose was right here. Gongson Ahri quickly began to observe Cho Ryu Hyang with sparkling eyes.

When Cho Ryu Hyang saw this, he too became a little interested. He began to use the Faultless View of The World.

“That old granny’s here?”

“Yes. She came here a while ago, requesting that she wished to see you.”

Gongson Chun Gi looked at the people in front of him with a unenthusiastic face.

“Do I really have to meet her?”

“There is no need to do so, your holiness.”

Ju Sang San, one of the eight guardians, replied immediately.

No matter what happens, he would always be on the Pope’s side. As Gongson Chun Gi seemed a little reluctant to go, Ju Sang San immediately sided with him.

But Gang Chang, who was making the report to the Pope, quickly spoke.

“She is the last Oracle (神女) of the church. I believe you should

give her an audience, as she dragged her old body all the way here for your holiness.”

“Goddess? She’s just a simple monk (巫女). Don’t be fooled, Gang Chang.”

Guardian Wu, who had been watching this from the sidelines, said this. When Gang Chang heard this, he quickly apologized.

“Yes, I made a mistake. She’s the last monk of the church. Your holiness, please go meet her with your kind heart.”

Gongson Chun Gi looked at Gang Chang quietly. The man in front of him had business sense, and was talented in many things.

But he just had too much attachment regarding traditions and whatnot.

Even if he was really attached to traditions, however, Gang Chang would never pester Gongson Chun Gi this much. There definitely had to be some other factor at hand.

“Did she made a prediction again?”

“.....”

Gang Chang couldn’t reply immediately. Gongson Chun Gi looked at the troubled man in front of him, and sighed.

“She must’ve made a prediction regarding my life this time or something, by the looks of it.”

Gang Chang bowed down immediately.

“.....This one is just worried about your holiness’s health. The or.....no, the monk’s prophecies never failed to take effect.”

Gongson Chun Gi seemed uninterested.

“She was just lucky. But her time is over. Making predictions with my life is just like gambling. This is good, actually. That stupid granny.”

But unlike what the Pope had said, everyone’s face in the room went stiff. They all knew.

They all knew how accurate the monk’s prophecies were. They weren’t afraid of her power, but they all had to admit that her prophecies were something that couldn’t be taken lightly.

Soon, everyone had a worried expression on their face. Everyone here was extremely worried about the Pope’s health.

He was, after all, the strongest Pope in the history of the church. Not only that, Gongson Chun Gi had a strange power that just made people gather towards him. To them, Gongson Chun Gi

definitely was someone they didn't want to lose.

“What? Are you all actually believing that old granny?”

“.....It might be good for your holiness to go meet her.”

When even Ju Sang San changed his attitude carefully like this, Gongson Chun Gi's face twisted.

“You shouldn't believe in things like those. I'm not gonna die. Can't you see how healthy I am?”

When Gongson Chun Gi began flexing to show off his bulky muscles, Guardian Wu and Guardian Ju both sighed.

“Your holiness, we're serious. If that granny made a prophecy like that, this isn't a matter that can be ignored that easily.”

“Che, you guys are no fun. You get worried too much.”

Gongson Chun Gi rolled his sleeves back down, and stood up unenthusiastically. He was going to get outside. Gang Chang hurriedly said something when he saw this.

“Your holiness, please. I know that you don't wish to do it, but please meet the monk at least once. She says she has a solution to bypass the prophecy.”

When Gang Chang said this with a desperate tone, Gongson Chun Gi sighed.

Gongson Chun Gi hated doing anything troublesome, but he didn't want his subordinates to worry about him.

And come to think of it, he had something that he had to settle with that granny. He had been putting it off for such a long time, because it was just bothersome.

“Fine, I'll go meet her.”

“Thank you, your holiness.”

“But it's not because I believe in her prophecy. I don't believe in that stuff. I'm just meeting her because I don't want her to say anything like this ever again.”

“Alright.”

Gang Chan just made a happy face.

When he heard the monk's prophecy, he tried to make the monk tell him the way to prevent the Pope's death, but she just wouldn't talk.

She would keep saying that she'd only talk when the Pope came. Because of that, he came all the way here to request the Pope to

meet her.

“Guardian Wu.”

“Yes, your holiness.”

“Set up the coronation ceremony for my disciple with Guardian Ju. This is going to be an important event this year. Don’t make any mistakes. Gang Chang, you go make a report on the state of the Martial World right now.”

“Understood.”

Gongson Chun Gi began to walk towards the place where the monk resided after commanding his subordinates. Like mentioned earlier, the Heavenly Demon Church was a very religious group.

From the past, the people of the church believed in a mythical being known as God (神).

The sun and the moon. Before the Pope known as the Heavenly Demon came to being, the official name for the Heavenly Demon Church was the Church of the Sun and Moon (日月神教). It was a religion that worshipped the sun and the moon.

But after the Heavenly Demon appeared, the church changed completely. The church began to move into a new world. From there, the church had a big contradiction.

From a long time ago, the church had a Pope that represented God. But there was also someone who held an equal amount of power as the Pope.

The Pope represented the absolute power of the sun, and the Oracle (神女) represented the God's voice, or the moon.

She was a very special existence. Every year, she would take on the soul of god (神託) and make a prophecy, and every year, she would perform two big ceremonies.

Because of that, the Oracle had as much power as the Pope.

But when the Heavenly Demon became the Pope, everything changed. The Heavenly Demon didn't worship the sun and the moon. Instead, he just decided to change the whole religion itself so that everyone would worship him instead.

He himself became a living god. And he had the right to become one, too.

He had destroyed enemies several times bigger than them, and created the Ten Thousand Great Mountains by himself. From then on, the church's name changed to the Heavenly Demon Church.

Thanks to that, the Oracle's authority went up in the air. But no one really questioned that for the last few centuries.

There were no problems until Gongson Chun Gi became the Pope, at least. But when Gongson Chun Gi became the Pope, this logic just shattered to pieces.

“There can only be one god. Two is unneeded.”

The coronation of the Pope. When Gongson Chun Gi became the Pope, this was the first thing he said.

And in front of everyone in the church, he just took the Oracle's staff and turned it into fine powder.

“There is no need for an Oracle. Her existence itself is just useless.”

After saying that, he took off the Oracle's symbol of power, the crown, and spoke.

“I won't kill you. But you cannot get a heir from now. The time of Oracles would come to an end with you.”

That was what he had said. And on that day, the Oracle turned into a simple monk. Gongson Chun Gi stood in front of the door of the building where the Oracle was in, and stroked his chin.

‘Come to think of it, it's the first time meeting her after that incident.’

What kind of a face would she have? That granny didn't come out to any of the ceremonies for several decades after the incident.

He thought the granny lived well on her own alone, but was he thinking of things too simply?

“Well, I'll know when I meet her.”

When Gongson Chun Gi waved his hand, the door in front of him opened silently. On the other side, he could see an old woman standing politely.

“You're finally here, your holiness.”

“It's been a while, granny.”

Gongson Chun Gi and the Oracle. The meeting between the two, the two known to have a bad relationship with each other, started more peacefully than one would think.

Chapter 47. The Secret Between The Two

Rin approached the two people stealthily, but hesitated along the way.

Did the young lady ever talk with someone she saw for the first time as naturally as that? Rin quickly scrolled through her memories, but there didn't seem to be a case of that ever happening.

Should she really ruin this moment? Did she have the qualifications to do that?

Rin's mind was filled with chaos.

‘Uu, what do I do?’

Rin glanced at the other side of the artificial pond.

She couldn't sense it, but the administrator was probably watching her from the other side. She didn't have the courage to face the man's cold gaze again.

Rin thought for a while, then bit her lips and steeled her heart. If she delayed things longer, things might get really troublesome.

“Rin from the Ruling Fire House comes to take the young lady.”

When Rin suddenly made her appearance, Gongson Ahri made a surprised expression.

“Rin.....”

Rin spoke before Gongson Ahri could say anything.

“.....The elders in the house will get worried if you stay out this long, young lady.”

A frustrated face.

Gongson Ahri stared at Rin's face with a helpless expression, then soon turned to Cho Ryu Hyang with a sad face.

“It looks like I have to go back now.”

“.....”

Cho Ryu Hyang didn't reply. His meeting with her was quite interesting, but that was it.

‘There's no need to pay attention to anything else.’

That was how Cho Ryu Hyang stabilized his trembling heart. For some reason, whenever he looked at Gongson Ahri, he felt a little weird.

Cho Ryu Hyang fixed his glasses, and looked at the two people in front of him. At the same time, he could see the number floating above Gongson Ahri's head.

‘73.....’

It looks like you really can't fool blood.

Gongson Ahri. Her talent had an astronomical value of seventy three.

‘And.....’

Cho Ryu Hyang looked around, and scratched his cheeks. He hadn't noticed it before, but there happened to be an immense number of people hiding in the shadows around him.

It looked like they were there to protect the garden. And amongst them, there was a single man who stood out of everyone else.

‘Who is that?’

Cho Ryu Hyang's interest was no longer on Gongson Ahri, but rather that person. That person who was hiding on top of a single tree.

This person, who had a gray mantle on his face, possessed a

number that far outstripped everyone else's.

'80.....'

Who is that? Cho Ryu Hyang became curious.

Right then, Gongson Ahri stood up from her spot, and took off the bracelet around her arm.

"It was good seeing you. Here, this is a present from me to you."

Cho Ryu Hyang looked at the bracelet in front of him. The bracelet was made of dark jade. At first glance, one could tell that this object was something very precious.

Cho Ryu Hyang, after taking a good look at it, looked back up at Gongson Ahri and spoke.

"I have no reason to take this from you."

Gongson Ahri shook her head.

"You're wrong. You do have a reason to take this from me."

"And what would that reason be?"

"You said you are dad's disciple, right? That means you're like

family to me.”

“.....”

While Cho Ryu Hyang was wondering if that really was a valid excuse, Gongson Ahri looked down and spoke.

“Thank you for becoming dad’s disciple. Please take care of him well.”

Gongson Ahri forced the bracelet into his hands while he was frozen in place, not knowing what to do.

“I hope we meet again in the future.”

“.....”

Cho Ryu Hyang simply stared at Gongson Ahri, while she quickly walked away. He soon came back to his senses, then started to look at the top of the tree next to him.

He was doing that because on the tree was a man in gray, who was looking down at Cho Ryu Hyang. Cho Ryu Hyang could feel a strong sense of distrust in that man’s eyes.

‘He can see me?’

The administrator.

He quickly dispelled the thought that came up in his mind.

It just wasn't possible. Other than the Pope himself, there was no one in the church who could find him if he hid himself. Even the strongest of the eight guardians, Guardian Wu and Ju, wouldn't be able to find him, unless, of course, he was caught off guard.

The administrator. He was actually a hidden harmonious expert.

‘But then, that gaze.....’

Wasn't the boy clearly staring right at him? A feeling of suspicion slowly crept up in the administrator's heart.

While the administrator was caught in something of a dilemma, Cho Ryu Hyang opened his mouth.

“I want to talk to you.”

“.....!”

“Can you come down?”

The administrator opened his mouth, and closed it again. His impossible suspicion was actually correct.



“Rin, how was I? Did I look weird?”

“Yes. You looked weird.”

“Really? What do I do....”

“.....”

Rin didn't immediately respond to Gongson Ahri. She just made a bitter face.

Gongson Ahri's red face didn't disappear, even after leaving the garden. The reason for that was obvious. It was so obvious, it was startling, even.

“Did you fall for him?”

Gongson Ahri stopped moving, and looked at Rin.

“Eeh? What does that mean?”

“Did you fall for Cho Ryu Hyang?”

Gongson Ahri made a dumb face when she faced multiple questions from Rin.

“Did I really..... I don't know.....”

“Hmm.....”

Rin became a little worried when she saw Gongson Ahri become confused like this.

Gongson Ahri was a person who was scared of human relationships. Cho Ryu Hyang may have not known this, but the

attitude Gongson Ahri showed to Cho Ryu Hyang while talking actually took her a lot of courage.

‘I really hope she gets rewarded for doing that.....’

Cho Ryu Hyang was probably the first person ever to look at Gongson Ahri straight in the eye while talking. That was probably what made Gongson Ahri so social.....

“Would he not like me?”

A depressed void came out of Gongson Ahri. Rin took a look at the girl next to her, and opened her mouth.

“No way. There’s no one capable of not liking you.”

Rin combed Gongson Ahri’s hair, which had turned messy while running, and spoke.

“After all, you’re prettier than anyone else in the world, right? You should have some confidence.”

“Thanks, Rin.”

Rin smiled when she saw Gongson Ahri’s toothy grin.

“By the way, just what do you like about him?”

Gongson Ahri began to think seriously when she heard this question. Just what did she like about him? After thinking for a bit, Gongson Ahri looked at Rin, and answered.

“Eyes. I’ve never seen someone with eyes that pretty.”

Rin squinted her eyes when she heard that. Then she smiled mischievously, and spoke.

“Looks like you really did fall for him.”

“Eh? Eeh?”

Gongson Ahri finally figured out that she had been tricked, but before she could do anything else, Rin quickly pushed in.

“That’s good. Girls turn pretty when they fall in love. You’re definitely going to get prettier in the future.”

“Rin!”

Gongson Ahri let out a nervous shout.

Rin smiled, and spoke.

“I’ll keep it a secret from others.”

“Really?”

“Yeah. But you’ll have to listen to me from now on, alright?”

“Nn.”

Gongson Ahri hugged Rin tightly. Rin pat Gongson Ahri in return, and decided to help the girl in her endeavors.

“You’re probably not going to believe the prophecies that this old hag’s going to talk about.”

“Obviously.”

Gongson Chun Gi’s answer was frank. However, the monk wasn’t surprised. Perhaps she already expected something like this to happen? She simply smiled, and opened her mouth.

“I knew it. You’re that kind of a person, after all.”

The oracle. The old female who used to be called that hesitated for a moment, then began to talk.

“Contrary to what others think, I don’t actually hate you. In fact, I’m grateful towards you. Do you know that?”

Gongson Chun Gi looked at the oracle, and smirked.

“Of course I do.”

“Did you also know that I was in love with you from a young age?”

It was a question that strayed from the main topic. Gongson Chun Gi stroked his beard, and smiled.

“You looked at me all the time. There was no way I wouldn’t have noticed.”

The oracle smiled. She was finally able to confess her feelings after several decades. It felt good.

“There really are some good things that happen later in my life. I thought I would never be able to say it. I was too embarrassed.”

The oracle said this, and stared at Gongson Chun Gi’s face. She spoke.

“I hated this job from the first moment. My position was quite high, but I was able to do nothing on my own. It was a frustrating life. You were the one who set me free from those chains. I’m thankful for that.”

“It needed to happen anyways. There’s no reason for you to be thankful.”

The oracle nodded. Gongson Chun Gi became a Pope at too young an age. It was probably necessary for the young him to push off the oracle in order to secure his position.

The oracle looked down at her wrinkled hands, and opened her mouth.

“Martial arts are really quite unfair. To think that I’m dying already, and you didn’t even change from the past..... It’s unfair.”

Gongson Chun Gi didn’t say anything. He just looked at the oracle for a while, and frowned. There was a black energy surrounding the oracle. It was the cloud of death.

“You really are dying.”

The oracle confirmed it.

“I’ll probably last 15 days at most.”

“Is that a prophecy?”

Prophecies. Gongson Chun Gi felt a sense of rejection at the very word. Therefore, he made a very uncomfortable expression.

The oracle grinned when she saw Gongson Chun Gi's expression.

“Hoho, if you don't like that expression, let's just call it the wisdom of life.”

“Wisdom of life. That's not a bad way of putting it.”

Gongson Chun Gi brought a cup of tea to his mouth, and spoke.

“Honestly, you were quite a fine woman.”

“Thanks.”

“You should blame me for having such high expectations for everything.”

The oracle looked at Gongson Chun Gi, and cheerfully smiled.

“Hoho, but I really didn't think you'd fall in love with a foreigner.”

“Aah, she really was amazing. The best woman in my life.”

When Gongson Chun Gi gave a thumbs up, the oracle smiled.

At the time, there was an immense amount of rejection from the members of the church, but no one could get Gongson Chun Gi to

change his mind. At the time, a marriage with a foreigner really was too abnormal.

And to think a person like the Pope of the Heavenly Demon Church would try to marry a foreigner. Such a thing has never happened in the course of history itself.

But it still happened. After all, the Pope really was set on marrying the woman.

“Seeing you try to learn the foreigner’s language and culture really touched me. Even if you had to learn everything again from the start, you still looked happy.”

“Aah, I was indeed happy.”

Gongson Chun Gi licked his lips as he said that. Even if the time he spent with her was small, his regret of having to see her go lasted to this day. But he was still satisfied. After all, didn’t his wife leave him with something that he wouldn’t even be able to trade with the world?

The oracle, who had been observing Gongson Chun Gi think of the past, spoke.

“You know, even if I never was able to say what I had in my mind, I still got satisfied with just looking at you every day. It was the only thing that I really enjoyed in life.”

Gongson Chun Gi rested his head on his hand, and grinned at the oracle.

“You’re saying all this at this age, of all things? There’s a lot of women who do the same thing as you, you know?”

The oracle smiled. Gongson Chun Gi’s brazen attitude still hadn’t changed from the past.

“Looks like you just brought me here to say everything you wanted to say before you died. I’ll let you off for once, damned hag.”

The oracle nodded. Then, she straightened her back, and put on a serious face, contrary to before.

“Just think of what I’m about to say as an old woman’s nagging.”

“An old woman’s nagging..... is it something like a wisdom of life?”

Gongson Chun Gi looked at the oracle as he leaned back on his chair even more than before.

The oracle nodded and spoke. It didn’t matter what the Pope thought. She just wanted to have the Pope listen to her words at least once. That would be sufficient.

“I got a prophecy about ten days ago. Of course, you wouldn’t believe this.”

“Hmmm.....”

A prophecy was something very uncertain. After all, even God is something that people doubt exist, don’t they?

From the moment the church stopped worshipping the sun and the moon, ‘God’ lost its power.

But she got a prophecy despite that? Was she telling him to believe in something that he didn’t know where it came from?

Gongson Chun Gi didn’t complain, though. From the start, he didn’t believe in either God or prophecies.

But he was still kind enough to listen to what a old woman had to say.

“A darkness will descend from the North. It’s going to be dangerous.”

“The North.....”

What was up in the North again? While Gongson Chun Gi was thinking of such things, the oracle spoke again.

“You can’t see the danger now, but it’s already near, so you’ll have to get ready for it. After all, this danger is so great, that it might be a threat even to you.”

Gongson Chun Gi smiled. The only thing that could threaten him was time.

Age. Even Gongson Chun Gi couldn’t stop the terrifying power of time.

But other than that, there was no one in the entire world who could be a threat to him. The oracle should know this better than anyone. But since it was the oracle, who knew of his power, saying this in the first place, he became quite amused.

“Interesting.”

A martial artist’s life was full of dangers. Since the Alliance was significantly weakened, the Heavenly Demon Church had no enemies under the heavens.

But he still had to be on guard? He didn’t believe in prophecies in the first place, but this was actually quite interesting.

“I’ll be looking forward to it, hag.”

The oracle smiled. This was good. As long as the Pope was aware of this situation, all would be well.

The Pope she knew was a person strong enough to destroy the heavens. As long as such a person knew of the dangers that might befall him, he should be able to deal with it properly.

“Hoho, now I can die in peace.”

Gongson Chun Gi refilled the oracle’s empty cup with tea, and spoke.

“I pray that you go to a good place.”

This was the end. Speaking any more than this would just make things awkward. This would be the last meeting between Gongson Chun Gi and the oracle. After exactly 15 days, the oracle died.

It was all according to her prophecy.

Chapter 48. The Third Bet

The boy licked off the blood on his hand with his tongue. He could feel pain as he tasted the blood in his mouth. Come to think of it, no part of his body was undamaged at that point.

His whole body was filled with injuries. But he still managed to laugh. He laughed while being covered with blood. He was happy. He was happy taht he survived.

He was happy that he survived that hellhole. He managed to survive by using his comrades as a stepping stone.

Krrrng–

Suddenly, the giant stone that covered one of the stone walls began to move, letting in a stream of light. The boy held up his hand to block it. After a while, his eyes began to adapt to the light.

“Is this it?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Hm, he looks useful.”

“He’s the boy that made it out of the the Prison of Life and Death (生死獄) in the shortest amount of time. His body is very solid, too. Even the Medicinal House approved of the boy’s physique.”

“Hoh?”

The boy didn't know who the people outside were. Actually, there really was no need for him to know them.

“What is your name, child?”

The boy spat out the intestine he had been chewing, and answered.

“7984.”

He had forgotten his name a long time ago. After all, it was necessary to throw away useless things like names or memories in order to survive in this hell.

“Ke, I like your eyes. Good. Let's use him. I hope the Pope likes him, too.”

“If he doesn't like this boy either, I really don't know who to choose.”

“Don't worry. We're sure to get a decent result this time.”

The old man approached the boy with a satisfied smile. The boy flinched, and instinctively swung his sword, but it was useless against the old man.

Deng–

“Kuk!”

The boy had swung his sword straight at the old man’s neck, but the one to get hurt was unexpectedly, the boy. Looking at the boy, who had been stumbling backwards due to getting his hand ripped, the old man spoke.

“Che, looks like I’m going to have to teach you some manners before I take you to the Pope. Damn it, isn’t this boy more like an animal than a human right now?”

“I’ll fix him right now.”

The man who had been standing behind the old man. He took out the whip hanging on his waist, and spoke with a dreary face.

“It would do if you come back after four days, sir.”

“Alright. I’ll leave it to you.”

After four days, when the old man came back to visit, the boy looked very different from before. It was evident by the fact that the boy, who were a clean white robe, greeted the old man

properly.

“Un Hui (雲輝) of the Earth Sword Party (地劍黨) greets Guardian Ju Sang San.”

The white leader from the Earth Sword Party. This was the new form of the boy.

“Hoh? You look quite nice like this. But Un Hui? Is that your real name?”

“.....Yes.”

“How about your surname? Did you forget about it?”

“.....Yes.”

Since it's been so long since he had been called by that name, he just barely managed to remember his name.

“Well, fine. It should do. Follow me for now. We need to go see the Pope.”

Un Hui quietly followed Guardian Ju. He didn't know what would happen in the future, but he definitely wouldn't act foolishly like before.

This place was filled with monstrous experts like this old man here. If he made trouble here with the little power he had, he would die in an instant.

“This is where the Pope is. Act politely in front of him.”

“I understand.”

Un Hui breathed carefully, and waited. Like the giant plaque of the building that read “Temple of The Sacred Heart (聖心殿)”, the door was equally giant.

Krrrrrrr–

After a while, the doors opened outwards, and the Pope who had been sitting inside could be seen.

The man who held the most power in the history of the church, and the Pope who was the strongest out of all others in history.

“Is this child the one?”

Gongson Chun Gi. He greeted his little visitor with a bored face.

“Yes. He’s the boy that passed the Prison of Life and Death in the shortest time. He’s 18 years old.”

“Hm. He looks younger though? What was the time it took him to pass the prison?”

“Eight months.”

“Eight months? He’s pretty good.”

But unlike what he was saying, one couldn’t really sense any thrill coming from Gongson Chun Gi. Ju Sang San became a little agitated when he saw this.

“Please look carefully, your holiness. This is a boy with a good physique that even the Medicinal House approved of. As he has solid foundation, and plenty of talent, he should be worthy of becoming your disciple.”

“Yeah? You might be right.”

Gongson Chun Gi looked at Un Hui with dull eyes.

Right then.

‘Eh?’

Un Hui flinched, and stepped back. Without even knowing why he was doing it, he began to look around urgently.

‘What was that?’

Gongson Chun Gi, when he saw the boy’s actions, became a little interested, and stood up.

“You actually brought something quite good this time.”

Gongson Chun Gi, who had been so far from the boy previously, suddenly appeared right in front of Un Hui. While Un Hui had been gulping in air out of surprise,

Gongson Chun Gi walked even closer to Un Hui, and looked down at the boy. Then, the man brought up Un Hui’s chin, observed the boy for a while, then grinned.

“He certainly has some potential. A boy who can feel when he can’t even see..... a strange one, he is. Quite interesting, actually.”

“Y, you mean.....”

When Guardian Ju made a expectant face while trembling, Gongson Chun Gi looked at something, clicked his tongue, and shook his head.

“He’s still lacking. And he already developed too many skills. He developed too much, so it’s useless. It’s too bad, Guardian Ju.”

“Kuk! No way!”

When Guardian Ju made a face of despair, Un Hui, who had been quiet till then, opened his mouth.

“Just what about me is lacking?”

“Mm?”

A rather defiant voice. When Ju Sang San frowned and tried to reprimand the bot, Gongson Chun Gi nodded.

“Mm, you have something missing. It’s something so small, that the likes of you wouldn’t even be able to notice it. But the difference between having that one thing and not having it is tremendous.”

“I can fix it.”

“It’s something that you can’t really fix.”

“I can do it.”

Un Hui looked straight at the Pope as he replied. The boy’s eyes were filled with a certain thing. A strong energy was contained within those eyes. It was desire.

“You! Impudent!”

When Ju Sang San tried to subdue Un Hui with a angered face, the Pope blocked him.

“Hey! Don’t get so angry, Guardian Ju. You’re going to get a stroke that way. We’re going to finish this by tomorrow at most anyway, so why are you being like this?”

“B, but that boy dared to..... in front of you.....”

“Just wait a bit. Let’s try handle this like adults, yeah?”

Gongson Chun Gi pushed away the raging Guardian sideways, and walked over to Un Hui. He opened his mouth.

“You said you can fix it?”

“Yes.”

The Pope smiled. It was a smile that contained a hint of his mischievousness.

“Interesting. Yes, a man needs to have that kind of an arrogance. Fine, I’ll give you a chance.”

Gongson Chun Gi stroked his chin, and opened his mouth.

“Let’s make a bet, child.”

“What are we striking here?”

Gongson Chun Gi pointed at the ground when Un Hui asked this.

“The Heavenly Demon Church. If you win, I’ll give you this.”

“Your holiness!”

When Guardian Ju screamed loudly, Gongson Chun Gi pushed the man away again and spoke.

“I am a very generous man, you see. If you’re going to bet something, it needs to be something as big as this, don’t you think?”

Un Hui didn’t say anything, and looked at Gongson Chun Gi’s eyes. The Pope’s eyes were filled with mischievousness, but it was also filled with confidence.

And with that confidence came an immense amount of energy that wouldn’t bow down to anyone.

‘He’s not a person to lie.’

Un Hui nodded.

“I’ll do it.”

“Good. You have spirit. That’s how a man should be! Kuhahaha!”

Gongson Chun Gi revealed his white teeth, and smiled joyously.

“Then, now that I’ve shown you what I’m going to stake in this bet, it’s high time you showed me yours, right? What will you stake in this bet?”

Un Hui thought a bit. What should he stake? Did he have something that actually was worth the entire church?

Un Hui, who had been looking at the grinning Pope, was stuck with a single thought that opened his eyes.

‘I do have something like that.’

Un Hui looked directly at Gongson Chun Gi, and opened his mouth.

“I will bet myself.”

“Yourself?”

“Yes. I will bet the remainder of my life here.”

Un Hui struck his chest confidently, and spoke. Gongson Chun Gi simply looked at the boy without saying anything. And then he smiled.

“It seems that you really hold yourself in high regard. The church is not as cheap as you might think, you know.”

“.....”

“But that’s not bad. I suppose your life is the only thing you have that you can bet. Since you found something close to the actual answer, I’ll take it.”

Gongson Chun Gi finished speaking, and wordlessly stretched his fist out to Un Hui. When Un Hui made a confused expression, Gongson Chun Gi grinned and spoke.

“A man’s words! (男兒一言)”

Un Hui’s eyes shone, as he struck his own fist on the Pope’s.

“Is worth a thousand gold! (重千金)”



Whilst Guardian Ju was just standing on the sidelines with a sour face, Gongson Chun Gi spoke.

“Ah. Come to think of it, we didn’t talk about what the contents of our bet was, did we?”

Un Hui made a “Oops” face and nodded.

“Let’s settle it on something we both find acceptable, shall we?”

“Alright.”

“The time will be..... mm, ten years should do it. Yes, this should be worth about ten years.”

That was how the ten year bet between Un Hui and the Pope. And the end of the bet resulted in Un Hui’s defeat. It was the administrator’s defeat.

‘I was almost done.’

If he had a bit more time, the church would’ve been his. Because of that thought, the administrator’s face as he looked at Cho Ryu Hyang was a little twisted.

‘That should’ve been my spot.’

The administrator bit his lips. The position as the heir. That position could’ve been his.

Over the past decade, he and the Pope made a total of three bets. The first two bets, the administrator won.

But.....

—You’re pretty good. If I don’t manage to find a disciple by the

end of the ten-year period, I will make you, Un Hui, the heir of the church.

When Un Hui won the second bet by becoming an expert of the harmonious level, that was what the Pope had said to him.

Administrator Un Hui. He was excited. After all, the Pope had said his name for the first time. So he began thinking that he won the last bet already.

But that wasn't what happened. A bitter taste spread throughout his tongue. There wasn't even a year left until the ten-year bet between him and the Pope ended. It truly was unexpected.

Just how should he take on the kid that the Pope brought in from the outside?

[I won the bet without desiring to do so. You must feel quite depressed. I'm sorry.]

When the Pope said this to Un Hui as soon as he returned, Un Hui felt a surge of emotion wash over him. It wasn't because he lost the bet. It was because of what the Pope said; that 'I'm sorry' from the Pope was what made him sad.

'So this kid is actually better than me in some way?'

He couldn't admit it. No matter how much he looked, the boy wasn't well-developed, nor did the boy look physically fit.

So why? Why was this boy chosen to be the heir of the church?

The Pope surely didn't choose this boy just to win the bet. The Pope Un Hui knew wasn't someone to do something like that.

'So there's something about this kid that only the Pope can see?'

This was his conclusion. Un Hui ground his teeth. He had to find the truth. He had to find it, so that he could go tell the Pope that the Pope made a wrong decision.

'I will find it.'

Regardless of the past, the position as the Pope of the church didn't really interest Un Hui.

It was just that he was afraid that he would be distanced from the man he already regarded as his teacher, the Pope.

Un Hui took a look at the boy who called him out, sighed in his mind, jumped down to the ground and bowed. The boy surprisingly managed to find him while he was in hiding.

"I am the administrator, young lord. I am sorry for introducing myself so late."

"You can lift your head now."

The administrator lifted his head to take a look at Cho Ryu Hyang. His eyes, which had been so full of complex emotions just a moment ago, looked extremely calm, like a slate of ice.

After all, he wasn't an inexperienced person who would show his inner thoughts to others.

“I have something to ask.”

“Please do, young lord.”

The boy probably did have something special. After all, the fact alone that the boy managed to find him proved that he was abnormal.

‘But I still won't acknowledge him.’

He could've made a mistake that revealed himself to the boy without realising it. While he had been thinking that, Cho Ryu Hyang looked around and spoke.

“What's this formation you people set up here? It's has an interesting shape.”

The administrator's eyes narrowed. Formation? Could it be that this boy managed to find the Bloody River Heaven Destroying Sword Formation (血河滅天劍陣)? The formation that no one

managed to notice in the history of the church?

‘He has enough talent to find such a thing? This child?’

That shouldn’t be possible. Cho Ryu Hyang, not caring about the administrator’s current feelings whatsoever, looked at the people in hiding and thought.

‘Normally, there’s five. At the time of transformation, about seven? No, there should be more.’

Cho Ryu Hyang’s eyes sparkled a bit. There were about a hundred people hiding here, and when an enemy attacked, they would surely come out like a fierce storm to attack the enemy by following a specific rule.

And the variables that controlled the transformation of this rule. These variables were more numerous than he had precious thought.

‘This is amazing.’

Cho Ryu Hyang grabbed a stick from the ground, and began to draw something on the ground. A tactical formation and a normal formation weren’t all that different in essence.

That’s why he began to draw the entire formation out on the ground, in order to predict all the moves that made up the formation.

‘What is he.....’

At first, he didn’t know what the boy was doing. After a while, the administrator’s eyes widened.

The thing the boy was drawing right now was definitely a destruction method of the Bloody River Heaven Destroying Sword Formation.

Swish—!

The administrator quickly swiped away the thing Cho Ryu Hyang had been drawing with his feet. Then, he began to glare at Cho Ryu Hyang with enraged eyes, and thought something.

‘You, just what are you?’

Chapter 49. The Young Witch's Visit

Practically all the authority in the Heavenly Demon Church belonged to the Pope. Naturally, that meant the Pope possessed quite a bit of power within the church. Not surprisingly, he, the Pope, had up to four military divisions of the church under him.

There was the Mara's Heavenly Wind Division (魔羅天風隊), the Pope's bodyguards. The Guardians, who were few in number, but boasted the most power in the entirety of the church. The Disciplinary Division, who were the ones to maintain order within the church. And lastly, there was the Ruling Fire House (異火宮).

“This isn't a matter we can just overlook.”

The captivating woman wearing a red dress. She had a skin white as snow, with lips that matched the white skin. Adding to that, her light purple hair gave the woman a mystical aura.

She was Baek So Chun (白素天), the current master of the Ruling Fire House, and the one who was known as Flame Witch in the martial world.

Her external appearance suggested that she was in her late twenties, but in reality, this woman was well over forty years old.

How could this woman display such effects, when she hadn't even entered the Harmonious stage?

The reason was because of two things: her innate strength, and the special magic unique to the Ruling Fire House was what gave Baek So Chun her youthful appearance.

This was why this woman was able to stay young after so many years.

“Rin (麟).”

“Yes, master.”

“I entrusted the job of looking after Ahri to you and your sister, did I not? Do you have anything to say about the failure of your job?”

“.....I apologize, master.”

Rin couldn't say anything. Not only did she lose the young lady, she had to go all the way to the Grass Shoe Garden without even getting a proper invitation.

The Ruling Fire House really lost face because of what happened this time. Even if this event didn't seem too significant to outsiders, to the members of the Ruling Fire House, who were secluded by nature, this was something very serious.

The Ruling Fire House.

They were one of the ten military divisions within the church, and the only one out of all of them to be solely consist of women.

“Ahri is still young. She is not yet mature.”

“.....”

“Things went well this time, but what if word got out about the young lady, and something bad had happened? Who would take care of everything then? Do you have the courage to face the enraged Pope?”

Rin, when she heard Baek So Chun’s question, drooped her head. The young lady was the precious daughter of the Pope. The young lady was brought up in a protected environment because of that.

But perhaps that only became a problem for the young lady. After all, the young lady saw the world in too positive of a light. She didn’t realize how dangerous the outside world was, nor did she realize how violent men could become at times.

“Normally, I’d cut off your necks to set an example to the others, but.....”

Baek So Chun stopped talking for a bit, then looked over at Gongson Ahri, who was kneeling on the ground right outside, begging for forgiveness.

“Since it looks like Ahri sincerely reflected on her actions, I’ll let

you get off with a [simple whipping](#) (笞刑).”

(TL: In ancient Asia, when giving out punishment, people would often be slapped on the butt with a heavy bat, usually up to 10 times for light punishment, and up to hundreds for more severe ones.)

“T, thank you, master.”

Rin let out a sigh of relief in her heart. At least they managed to control the whole situation just in time... if the situation got out of hand, something bad definitely would’ve happened. Being let off with just this seemed like a gift from the heavens.

“Go pay the price for your actions, and reflect upon what you have done this time.”

“Understood!”

When Baek So Chun waved her hand, the women in the area grabbed hold of Rin and Ryung, and took them outside.

When Gongson Ahri tried to follow them, Baek So Chun stepped in front and stopped her.

“Ahri.”

“Y, yes!”

When Gongson Ahri nervously replied back, Baek So Chun smirked, and rubbed Gongson Ahri's cheeks.

“These girls are getting punished because of you. Look carefully.”

“What?”

Gongson Ahri made a dark face whilst looking at Rin and Ryung get dragged away. Baek So Chun, amused by the girl's expression, whispered some words to Gongson Ahri.

“If you get whipped without reinforcing yourself with internal energy, a single hit would make your skin explode and injure your muscles badly. It may be our lightest punishment, but getting hit about ten times should put them down for roughly ten days.”

Gongson Ahri's eyes began to tremble. While Baek So Chun looked down at the poor scared girl with indescribable joy, Gongson Ahri made up her mind and spoke.

“Ma'am.....”

“What?”

Gongson Ahri looked at Baek So Chun with a scared face, and opened her mouth.

“S, since this is all my fault in the first place, can't I be punished

instead?”

Baek So Chun toyed with that idea for a bit. No, she pretended to. Indeed, the cause of all this lie in Gongson Ahri. Because of that, Gongson Ahri would technically have to be punished.

But.....

‘I wouldn’t be able to handle the consequences.’

Baek So Chun smiled bitterly in her mind. If she did indeed punish Gongson Ahri by whipping, it would be hard for her to escape the Pope’s wrath.

Even if the Pope was usually very easygoing and relaxed, when it came to his daughter, he was far from that. Baek So Chun knew that better than anyone.

“I cannot allow that.”

“W, why can’t I be punished? Is it because of my dad?”

It was a question that really hit the spot for Baek So Chun. But trying to deny that outright won’t really educate the girl properly. Baek So Chun shook her head coldly without even flinching when hearing the question.

“You have the duty to watch these girls get punished. Yes, that

should bring even more pain to you. This is my punishment for you.”

“.....!”

“Do you understand what I’m saying?”

When Gongson Ahri made a face filled with despair, Baek So Chun waved her hand.

“You can go ahead with the punishment.”

From a while back, Gongson Ahri had been desperately moving bandages and medicine everywhere, trying to help patch up Rin and Ryung’s buttocks which had been blasted to smithereens by the whips.

“Rin, does it really hurt that much?”

“Yes. It really hurts. I thought my butt was going to disappear.”

Gongson Ahri, when she heard that, nodded and muttered under her breath without realizing it.

“You’re right. It doesn’t even look like a butt anymore.”

“.....It’s all thanks to you, young lady.”

Gongson Ahri, who was kind of spaced out while rubbing medicine on the wounds of the two girls, became surprised upon hearing that, and panicked a bit.

“S, sorry. Are you angry?”

“Yeah.”

“Sorry, Rin. I must’ve been crazy at the time.”

“Apologize to my butt instead.”

“I’m sorry, I’m sorry.”

When Ryung saw Gongson Ahri rub Rin’s buttocks whilst apologizing to it, she shouted out to the girl.

“Young lady, I’m hurting over here, too.”

“Sorry, I’ll get there now.”

Gongson Ahri quickly walked over to Ryung’s bed, and began apologizing while rubbing the wound with medicine.

Rin looked at the girl rubbing medicine on Ryung’s buttcheeks,

and smiled.

Actually, such an amount of pain was nothing to Rin or Ryung.

It should be the first time for Gongson Ahri to see something so bloody, but it was different for Rin or Ryung. To them, this punishment really was light.

The martial world was not kind to women. It was a place where one had to do anything in order to survive.

If you thought about that, the martial world was actually a pretty good place for both men and women. After all, it was a place where strength was key.

Rin felt her buttocks begin to heat up, and slowly closed her eyes. When she did so, she could see something. She could see the cold gaze of the Administrator from the morning.

And...

‘It was the heir, right?’

The boy was called Cho Ryu Hyang, if she remembered correctly. To Rin’s eyes, the boy simply looked like a harmless ball of fur who lived a sheltered life.

The boy had a face that really didn’t suit the dangerous world she

lived in.

But that boy would soon become strong. Terrifyingly so.

That's what made her curious.

‘Just where did he come from?’

Where did he come from? That boy didn't look like he was from the Heavenly Demon Church.

Rin was getting curious of the heir's origins.

There were many Delivery Companies (標局) who set up their headquarters in the Sichuan castle. Out of all of them, there was a specific company that Cho Ryu Hyang was related to.

Gray Sky Delivery Company (蒼天標局). Cho Ryu Hyang was the heir of this company. And in the present, this company was facing a huge crisis.

“The Black Moon Guild wishes to have an official meeting with the company head.”

“Didn't I refuse you people last time? Tell your higher ups that I'm busy.”

Official Xu (許), the one who managed domestic and international affairs of the company, sweat profusely out of nervousness and spoke.

“This is different from last time, sir. Last time, we simply sent out a messenger, but this time, we brought a card of friendship (拜帖: A business card of sorts used in the past. Throwing someone out even after that person brought this signified that the receiver didn’t want to get involved with the visitor in any way, which could occasionally cause a bad relation to develop between two powers.) along with someone from headquarters.”

“You rude bastards!”

Bam—!

The head of the Gray Heaven Delivery Company, Cho Mu Ryung (草務令), slammed the table and stood up. When someone came at them so forcefully like this, there really was no need to treat them kindly.

“C, calm yourself, head.”

Cho Mu Ryung, who was about to stomp away in frustration, looked at Official Xu and frowned.

“What is it?”

“The opponent this time isn’t someone we can easily face.”

The opponent? Cho Mu Ryung’s eyebrows bunched together upon hearing that. When working in a business like this, one frequently comes across martial artists.

Eventually, one gets a sense of what the martial world is like, and becomes able to tell who is dangerous and who isn’t.

Official Xu was known to be more knowledgeable than anyone else in the Sichuan castle when it came to the martial world.

If even a man like this was acting as such, there really must’ve been something special about the person who came today.

“Even if the Black Moon Guild is big, they have little to no influence in the Sichuan area. They can’t just easily barge in out of the blue.”

“Of course I know that.”

Official Xu trembled a bit, and opened his mouth carefully.

“If they try to use force, everyone in the area would try and stop them, so we don’t really have to fear them regarding that matter... but if they use their brain, we should be quite afraid.”

“What do you mean? Are they going to use some sort of a tactic

or something?”

Official Xu lowered his body and whispered.

“The Black Moon Guild has a young witch. Didn’t I tell you about her before? Did you forget?”

“Ah.....”

Come to think of it, he did hear that the Black Moon Guild possessed a girl who was smarter than others by many times.

The granddaughter of the Night Emperor, Neng Mu Gi.

“.....You mean, that girl came all the way here herself?”

“Yes. So you should really be cautious this time. I don’t know why she came all the way here, but I don’t think she’s here to do any good.”

Cho Mu Ryung nodded. Even if he was facing a girl here, he couldn’t underestimate her. She had the Black Moon Guild at her back, along with Neng Mu Gi, one of the three sovereigns.

The Black Moon Guild was already quite scary, but Neng Mu Gi was even scarier. After all, Neng Mu Gi was a god of death who listened to no one.

“Thank you, Official Xu.”

Cho Mu Ryung calmed himself, and thanked Official Xu. If he greeted the girl in a frenzied state, something bad could have happened.

“It’s nothing..... After all, isn’t this basically my responsibility?”

“You make me feel reassured. Thank you.”

“I wish you luck.”

Cho Mu Ryung nodded at Official Xu, and slowly entered the guest room. Inside, there was a red-haired girl in black clothes.

Surprisingly, she was alone.

“Hello. My name is Neng Ha Young.”

Seeing the girl politely greet him, Cho Mu Ryung introduced himself with a serious face.

“I’m the head of this company, Cho Mu Ryung.”

“It’s nice to meet you.”

“Let’s sit down before we talk, shall we?”

When Cho Mu Ryung offered a seat, Neng Ha Young comfortably sat down and spoke.

“You must be feeling quite anxious because of me, correct?”

How should he respond? Having a person from the Black Moon Guild here for a long time was not a good thing.

Even though the Alliance’s power shrunk a bit after the battle with the Heavenly Demon Church, the region of Sichuan was still under the Alliance’s jurisdiction. Neither the Black Moon Guild nor the Heavenly Demon Church could move freely in this area.

When Cho Mu Ryung made a troubled face instead of answering, Neng Ha Young opened her mouth.

“I can’t remain here too long either. So why don’t we just get straight to the point?”

“That would be good.”

Neng Ha Young nodded. As much as Cho Mu Ryung found this whole situation uncomfortable, she didn’t find this particularly comforting either.

But she had something to ask him directly. Somebody was

blocking their information network. Because of that, she couldn't get the information she wanted about Cho Ryu Hyang.

So she just made up her mind and came all the way here. Honestly, she had an idea of who it was that was interfering the information network.

But finding it out wouldn't really do her any good, so she was pretending to not know about it.

'The Alliance.... I'll be sure to pay you back in full someday.'

Neng Ha Young thought of the Alliance's informatics group, and grit her teeth.

"What do you want?"

Neng Ha Young looked around a bit when she heard Cho Mu Ryung's question. She couldn't sense anyone nearby.

'Well, it wouldn't matter if someone came inside, anyway.'

No, she was actually hoping someone would come in. Neng Ha young carefully looked at Cho Mu Ryung, and opened her mouth.

"Is Cho Ryu Hyang your son?"

Cho Mu Ryung's face stiffened the moment he heard his son's name coming from the mouth of Neng Ha Young.

He suddenly had an ominous feeling growing in his mind.

“How do you know my son?”

“I met him by chance.”

“Where?”

Cho Mu Ryung desperately tried to control his facial expressions, and looked at Neng Ha Young. Neng Ha Young stared back as she spoke.

“I met him at the Qilian mountains.”

“Q, Qilian mountains?!”

Wasn't that the place where the war took place recently? Why was his son all the way over there?

Cho Mu Ryung somehow calmed his heart, and began to think carefully. He was a merchant. He always had to have the worst possible situation in his mind, but he didn't want to do that. Not now.

“When did you meet him? Who was he with?”

Finally, a question she had been waiting for. Neng Ha Young smiled in her mind, and answered.

“I met him right before the war started, with the experts from the Heavenly Demon Church.”

Cho Mu Ryung’s face paled. The worst scenario in his mind had actually come to life.



Chapter 50. The Uninvited Visitor

The Head of the Gray Heaven Delivery Company, Cho Mu Ryung, was standing out in his yard with a dumb face. Moments before, he had told that girl, Neng Ha Young, everything that she wanted to know. Now, he was just resting here in a daze.

“Dear, did something happen?”

“Honey.....”

Cho Mu Ryung looked at his wife with a frown. The wife sensed something ominous from her husband’s face, so she approached her husband and lightly grabbed hold of his hand.

“Is there something troubling you?”

“Our son.....”

Cho Mu Ryung’s wife, Yu Song Ryung’s face stiffened. Their child was sent to an academy in order to learn more about subjects regarding the family business. Did something happen to the boy?

When Yu Song Ryung made an anxious face, Cho Mu Ryung sighed and opened his mouth.

“Actually, a while ago, old man Jang sent me a message. It was about our boy going on a trip with his teacher..... Apparently

Jang couldn't stop them because they were so adamant about going. I didn't think much about it at the time, since our boy is a smart child, but to think he would go to the Qilian mountain.....”

Yu Song Ryung's face paled. She knew about what had happened at the Qilian mountain. The Alliance-Demon War took place, and an unimaginable amount of experts died.

The story of the Alliance's crushing defeat was still a hot topic. The problem was, their child was there where the war took place.

“What happened to him? Is he safe?”

Cho Mu Ryung couldn't say anything to his wife, who suddenly gripped his hand much stronger than before. Even he didn't know much about the situation at hand.

He didn't trust everything Neng Ha Young said, but because of that uneasy feeling he felt, he was asking anyone he could get his hands on about his son.

“Someone should contact us soon enough.....”

“What do you mean that someone's going to contact us?”

Cho Mu Ryung looked into his wife's trembling eyes for a bit, then sighed. He then proceeded to tell her about the conversation he had with Neng Ha Young.

Neng Ha Young suspected that their son was involved with the Heavenly Demon Church in some way. As her suspicions did make quite a lot of sense, Cho Mu Ryung was feeling extremely uncomfortable.

If his son was indeed connected with the Heavenly Demon Church, it would cause a lot of problems.

‘It’s my fault.’

The moment in his life when he answered his son’s question about the martial world lightly weighed heavily in his mind. A delivery company could only be near the martial world by its nature.

They would occasionally collaborate with a martial sect when delivering valuable goods.

Whenever Cho Ryu Hyang saw that, he would ask a question about the martial world, and Cho Mu Ryung would answer in a way that made the martial world seem like a place that helped the business quite a bit.

–It doesn’t matter if a cat is white or black, as long as it can catch mice.

Cho Mu Ryung had said this to his son. It was a quote he heard from someone else in the past.

After all, it didn't matter to them where a martial artist was from, as long as he/she could take care of bandits.

He said this to his son so that his son would prioritize strength over status, but now, he was kind of regretting he had said that.

Right now, here in the Sichuan castle, it wasn't an exaggeration to say that the power of the Alliance was the most prevalent.

When a person was running a company, it was important to make sure that the company wasn't favoring one side over the other. Especially in the martial world.

And if that company was starting to lean towards the Heavenly Demon Church out of all things, it was important to try to end that relationship before anything bad happens.

“Don't worry, dear. Since the boy's smart, I don't think he'd do anything dangerous.”

Even though the Heavenly Demon Church is strong, there was no guarantee that it would stay strong. A merchant who only looks into the near future can never make it big.

A good merchant had to look at things while considering the future farther away. Because of that, Cho Mu Ryung believed that the Heavenly Demon Church's power wouldn't last long.

He believed it to be something like a summer night's dream, short and fleeting. At least, that's what he thought until an uninvited guest visited him in the night.

Cho Mu Ryung first felt the change at dawn.

When he woke up due to the chilling cold that ran through his back, he saw that someone had snuck into his room.

‘An assassin?’

He instinctively grabbed the sword by his bed, and stood up.

“Who is it!”

When Cho Mu Ryung shouted out loudly, the man in the room began to speak politely.

“Because of some special circumstances, I could only visit you at a time like this. Please understand.....”

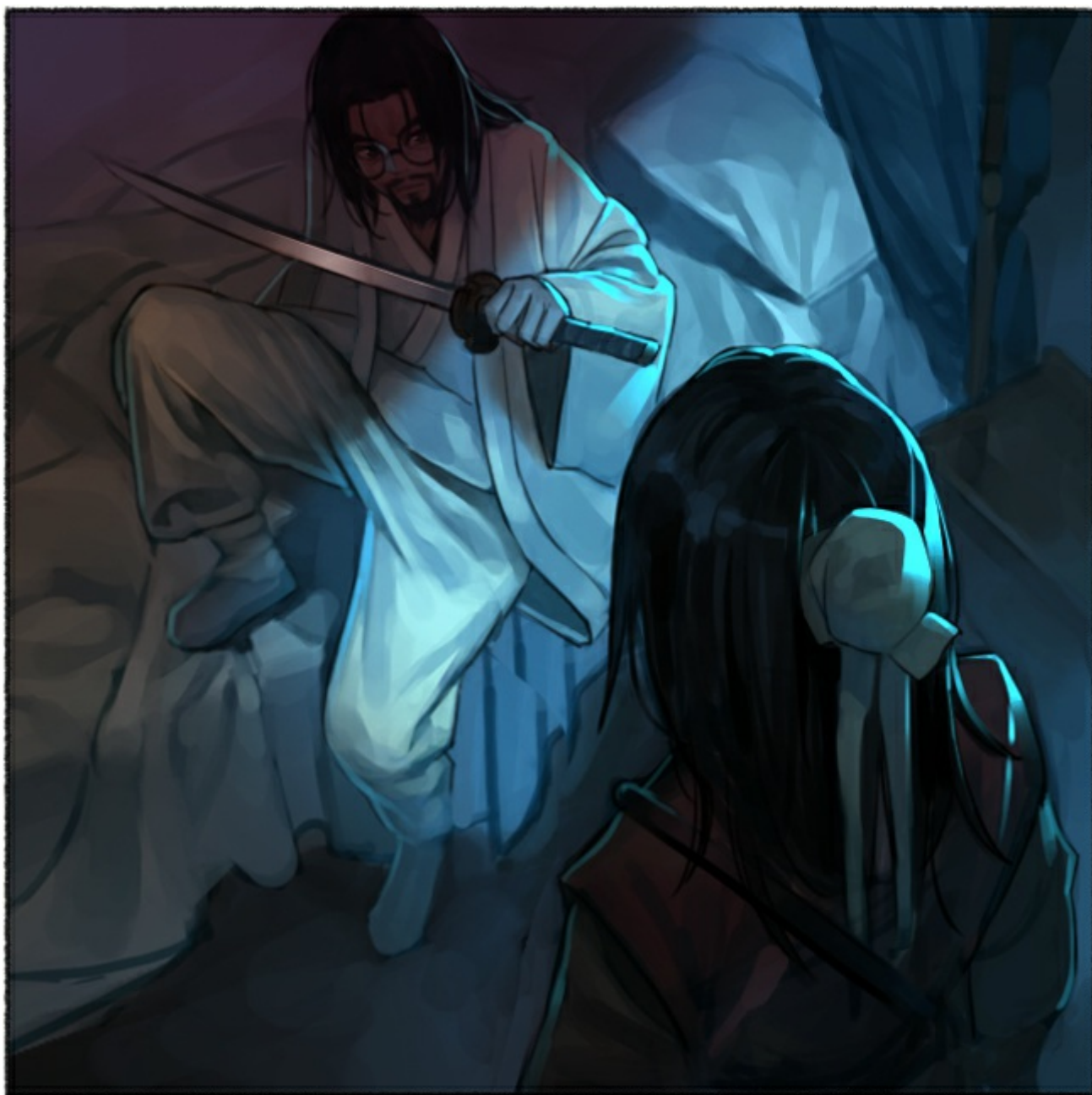
Cho Mu Ryung could detect that this person in front of him was very calm and collected at the moment, given his tone. Maintaining that kind of an attitude was something that only a person who was confident in his abilities could do.

At that moment, Cho Mu Ryung began to look around urgently. His surroundings were too quiet. The person in the shadows smiled when he saw that, as if he had sensed Cho Mu Ryung's anxiety.

“I put everyone in the vicinity to sleep, so that we talk without interruptions. No one will come if you shout. Even your wife.”

“.....”

Just when? Cho Mu Ryung tightly gripped his sword. He suspected this already, but the person in front was indeed someone whose skills he could not fathom.



But that didn't mean he'd go down without a fight. While he had been trying to look for a chance to attack, though, the man in front of him began to politely introduce himself.

"I am sorry for the late introductions. I am from the Heavenly Demon Church, and my name is Um Seung Do."

"T, the Heavenly Demon Church?!"

Wasn't the Heavenly Demon Church that infamous church of

demons? Why did that come here? Cho Mu Ryung made an anxious face. It was understandable.

After all, just the name of the church was capable of inciting fear. The church had always been the strongest.

Especially now that they defeated the Alliance. But the thing Cho Mu Ryung was afraid of at the moment was a lot of more realistic.

He was afraid because of his conversation with Neng Ha Young during the day. Wasn't the timing between these two people here too coincidental?

Neng Ha Young definitely said that his child was related to the church somehow.

‘Could it be.....’

After an ominous feeling swept through his body, the man opened his mouth slowly.

“I knew Neng Ha Young dropped by in the morning. As expected, she was a smart child.”

When Um Seung Do came into the building and stumbled across Neng Ha Young and Cho Mu Ryung's conversation, he became extremely conflicted.

He was conflicting over whether he should kill the bastardly girl on the spot, or just let her go.

The girl didn't realize it yet, but she was trying to do something extremely dangerous. She was trying to find the connection between Cho Ryu Hyang and the church.

It didn't look like anything at first, but if she actually managed to find what the connection was, wouldn't she reach a huge conclusion?

‘The Heir of the church.’

The Heir must never be exposed to the public. The Heir must be nurtured in a safe haven where he can grow to support the church.

Having the Heir's identity exposed would create an immense amount of danger for the church itself.

Not only that, the current Heir really was too weak. If some kind of danger appeared, no matter how small, there would be a chance of him dying.

‘Let's kill her.’

Um Seung Do reached this conclusion, and immediately set out to kill, but at that moment, he couldn't even lift a finger.

He became pressured by a huge amount of killing intent the moment he thought of moving. A killing intent potent enough to make a peak expert like Um Seung Do freeze on the spot.

There was someone next to Neng Ha Young. Um Seung Do still couldn't forget the aura that the person next to that girl gave off.

‘That person was definitely a harmonious expert.’

That much energy (無形之氣: formless energy produced by an expert) could only be produced by a harmonious expert. The problem was, Um Seung Do had no idea who this mysterious expert was.

There were only two harmonious experts in the Black Moon Guild. Neng Mu Gi, one of the three sovereigns, and Sang Dong Ha, the Chasing Blood Lord.

But these two people weren't people to had the time to act as a bodyguard for some young girl. That meant that there was some other harmonious expert protecting her.... that made Um Seung Do very confused.

“You saw Neng Ha Young?”

Um Seung Do nodded at Cho Mu Ryung's sudden question.

“Then you heard what we talked about?”

“It wasn’t intentional, but yes.”

Um Seung Do could’ve lied, but he decided not to. Cho Mu Ryung probably wasn’t going to be an enemy, which meant that he didn’t have to lie to the man.

Of course, Cho Mu Ryung might not think that, but that’ll all pass in due time.

“So you heard about the matters regarding my son?”

Things would get important from here. Um Seung Do nodded with a serious face.

“Tell me. Is my child really involved with your people?”

Um Seung Do knew there was no one nearby, but he did a quick check of his surroundings anyways, and opened his mouth.

“Yes.”

Cho Mu Ryung’s face went through a variety of changes. His suspicions had just been confirmed.

‘Why my son?’

That was the question that weighed in his mind. Just what were they going to do with his child? While he had been thinking that, Um Seung Do began to talk in a more respectful manner than before.

“The Young Lord became the Heir to the church. The future Pope. I was sent here in order to share the joyous news.”

“.....”

What? Good news? Cho Mu Ryung stiffened like a statue with his mouth wide open. He still didn't know what this man in front of him was talking about.

Since Um Seung Do expected such a reaction already, he prepared himself to explain the whole situation more in detail. The man in front of him was worthy of such things.

“To be more specific, the Young Lord Cho Ryu Hyang became the official disciple of the Pope. The Young Lord is currently at the main church in order to train.”

Clang-

The sword in Cho Mu Ryung's hand fell down powerlessly. The sword that Cho Mu Ryung never let go of, even when being battered by clubs, just fell down.

“The P, Pope? You said the Pope?”

“Yes sir.”

Cho Mu Ryung’s face became dazed. Just who was the Pope? Was the Pope not the person who was crucial in leading the recent war to an outstanding victory?

The man who was recognized by all to be the strongest in the world.

‘The Strongest Demon Under The Heavens (天下第一魔).’

That was what Gongson Chun Gi was being called at the moment. To become the disciple of a person like that, this was too outrageous, wasn’t it?

Um Seung Do, who seemed to have expected such a thing already, just smiled and opened his mouth.

“Congratulations, sir. This is a glorious event for the church. Soon enough, the church will provide you with a gigantic reward.”

Cho Mu Ryung couldn’t hear anything.

Normally he was known to be a very calm individual, but what was going on around him right now really wasn’t something he could’ve expected.

‘The Demon Church..... The Demon Church. Just what in the world.....’

He couldn’t figure out where and how to start clearing things up. In the end, Cho Mu Ryung just fell to his knees.